TALES OF VOODOO

PDC

SEPTEMBER 1971 50¢

IN THIS ISSUE:

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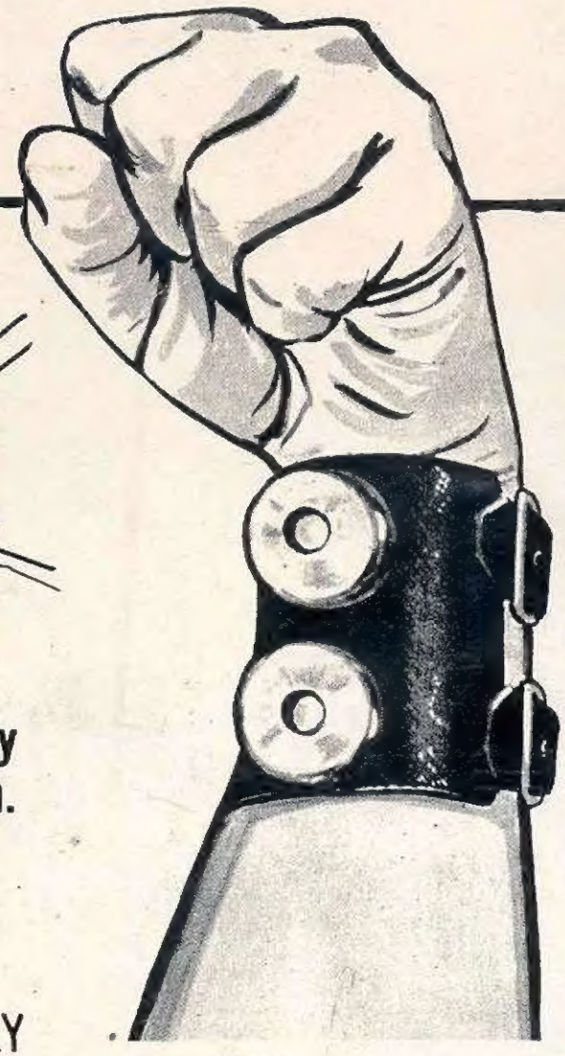

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CARL BURGOS, Editor IRVING FASS, Art Director
EZRA JACKSON, Art Editor

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"DANCE!" SCREAMED THE FRIGHTFUL FIGURE OF DEATH! ... AND THE FETID STENCH OF THE GRAVE CHOKED JOHN DRUNE'S QUIVERING NOSTRILS... AND HE KNEW AT LAST THAT THE MOULDERING HORROR IN HIS ARMS WAS THAT OF DEATH!

DEADMAN'S DANCE

TO MORBID, HUNGRY NIGHT CLUB CROWDS THE DEVIL'S DEN OFFERED NEW SENSATIONS IN ENTERTAINMENT!

THEY SAID OF JOHN DRUNE, THE OWNER, HE ALWAYS PRESENTED STARTLINGLY DIFFERENT ENTERTAINMENT!

IT WAS DON WAND WHO SPRANG TO SMOTHER THE FLAMES, BUT HER SHRIEKS OF ANGUISH HAD DIED AWAY!

YOU... TRICKED ME... LIED! YOU... KILLED ME! BUT... I'LL HAVE... REVENGE! AHHHH!
MURDERER!

YOU LIED ABOUT FIREPROOFING HER DRESS! YOU KILLED HER BUT I'LL KILL YOU!

I'LL KILL YOU...
MR. DRUNE WASN'T TO BLAME! IT WAS AN ACCIDENT! I SAW IT HAPPEN MYSELF!
TH-THANKS, OFFICER!

WHAT IF THIS DRIVES AWAY BUSINESS? A NASTY THING LIKE THIS COULD RUIN ME!

BUT JOHN DRUNE NEED NOT HAVE WORRIED ABOUT BUSINESS! NEXT NIGHT...
IS THIS WHERE THAT POOR GIRL WAS BURNED ALIVE? SHOW ME THE SPOT, DARLING! I LO-O-OVE CREEPY THINGS!
I SHOULD HAVE SAVED THAT DANCE DRESS! THEY'D BUY PIECES OF IT AS SOUVENIRS I'LL BET!

HOURS LATER, WHEN THE DEVIL'S DEN HAS CLOSED AND THE LAST HELP GONE FOR THE NIGHT!
AHH, THAT BEAUTIFUL, BEAUTIFUL MONEY! NOW I CAN SIT DOWN AND REALLY ENJOY MY GORGEOUS PROFITS!

LOOK AT THOSE LOVELY BILLS... EEEAAHHH!

YIIII! PUT ME DOWN! WHO ARE YOU? WHAT KIND OF A TRICK IS THIS? HOW DID YOU GET IN HERE?
TRICK?

SUDDENLY THERE WAS ANOTHER FIGURE IN THE ROOM!
EEEEAAA! MY MONEY! STOP!
BLOOD MONEY! IT CAME FROM FIRE... LET IT RETURN TO FIRE!

THE GRAVE STENCH WAS CHOKING, THE RELENTLESS GRIP OF SKELETON HANDS LIKE IRON! STILL JOHN DRUNE CLUNG TO A SHRED OF SANITY!
I GET IT! THIS IS AN ACT YOU WANT ME TO HIRE! OKAY, SEE ME TOMORROW! I SIGN A CONTRACT!
YOUR CONTRACT WITH ME WAS SIGNED THE DAY YOU WERE BORN, JOHN DRUNE!
ON YOUR FEET! WE HAVE COME TO SEE YOUR DANCE OF DEATH...
YOU'RE CRAZY! IT'S ALL SOME CRAZY NIGHTMARE!

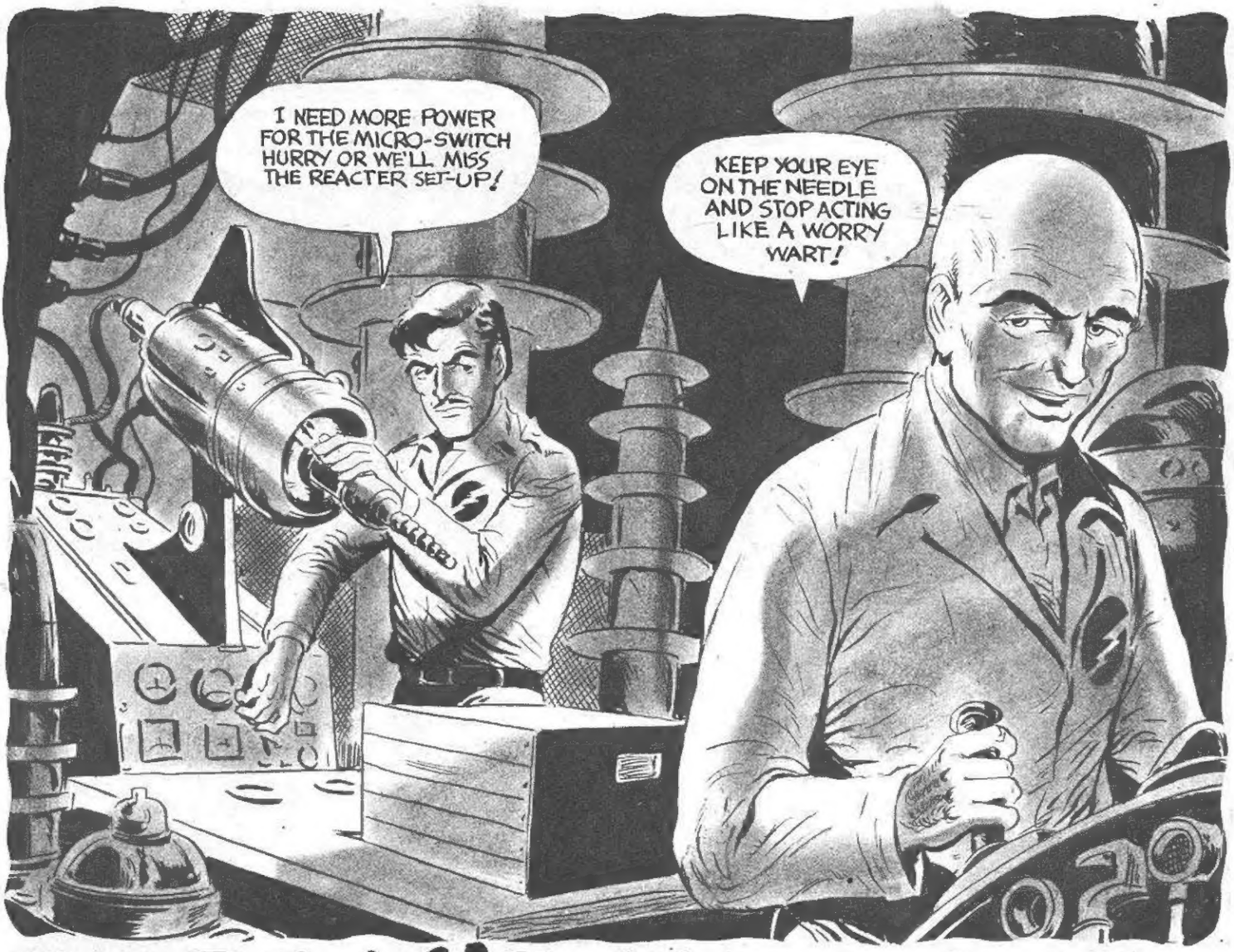
SUDDENLY JOHN DRUNE WAS RIMMED BY A RING OF FIRE!
EEEAA! FIRE!
OF COURSE! WASN'T THAT YOUR MASTER-PIECE? THE DANCE OF DEATH IN A CIRCLE OF FIRE?

AND ANOTHER FIGURE WAS THERE BEFORE HIM... A FIGURE SO FRAUGHT WITH HORROR THAT HIS SENSES REELED!
NO! NO! Y-YOU'RE DEAD!
OF COURSE... AND YOU KILLED ME! AND NOW IT IS YOUR TURN TO DANCE WITH DEATH!

I WON'T! EEOWW!
IF YOU FIND YOUR PARTNER DISTASTEFUL ...REMEMBER, YOU MADE HER AS SHE IS!

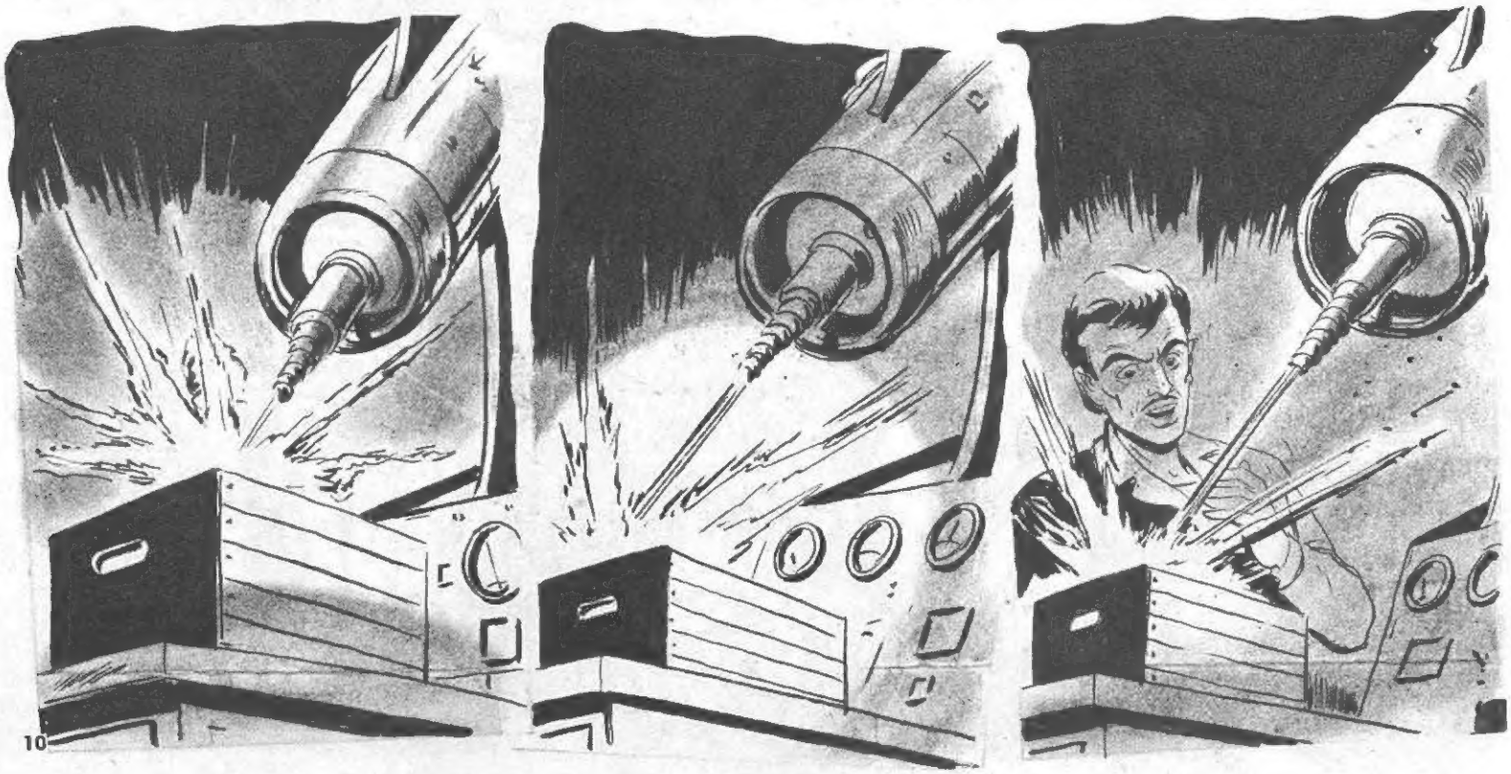
THE ORCHESTRA STRUCK UP THE STRAINS OF THE DEAD MARCH! JOHN DRUNE WHIRLED THROUGH THE MACABRE DANCE!
NO! NO! NO!
LET ME GO! GET AWAY FROM ME!
DO I REVOLT YOU, JOHN? YOU HIRED ME! I WAS SO BEAUTIFUL!
HELEN FELT THE SAME WHEN YOU MADE HER DANCE WITH ME!
HOLD ME CLOSER, JOHN! YOU'LL FIND ME ATTRACTIVE AGAIN WHEN YOU HAVE BECOME LIKE ME!
AFTER AN ETERNITY, THE SOBBING STRAINS OF MUSIC DIED! FROM THE TABLES CAME THE CLATTER OF BONY HANDS APPLAUDING!
CONGRATULATIONS, JOHN DRUNE! THE CROWD LIKES YOUR DANCE!
IN TERROR, JOHN DRUNE THREW HIMSELF AT THE FEET OF THE HIDEOUS APPARITION!
NO! NO! DON'T MAKE ME GO THROUGH THAT ANY MORE! I'LL DO ANYTHING... PAY ANYTHING...
BUT...
WHY, HIS FEET AREN'T MOULDERING BONES! THEY'RE SOLID FLESH... ICY COLD BUT FIRM FLESH!
OKAY! I'M WISE TO YOU, NOW! YOU WERE CUTE, BUT NOT QUITE CUTE ENOUGH!
SO YOU FINALLY DISCOVERED MY IDENTITY!

DON WAND! YOU SWORE YOU'D GET EVEN WITH ME!
AND I HAVE! SEEING YOU GROVEL ON THE FLOOR, WAS THE SWEETEST PLEASURE SINCE MY DEATH!
YOUR FLESH IS AS SOLID AS MINE!
OF COURSE! I ONLY JOINED THE RANKS OF DEATH A FEW HOURS AGO!
SEE? I HAD TO BE WITH HELEN! YOU DIDN'T KNOW SHE WAS MY WIFE! WE KEPT IT SECRET!
BAH! I'VE SEEN THAT GIMMICK BEFORE! TRICK KNIVES, PHONY DEATH MASKS!
WAIT UNTIL I GET MY HANDS ON ONE OF FAKE SKELETONS... AWRRK! THEY'VE VANISHED...
HAVE YOUR FUN! BUT YOU BURNED MY MONEY! I'LL SEE YOU IN FEDERAL PRISON FOR MUTILATING U.S. CURRENCY!
THE FEDS WILL FIND YOU! GO AHEAD AND HIDE, BUT THEY'LL DIG YOU OUT!
I'LL CALL THE POLICE AND... THE MORNING PAPER! HOW DID IT GET HERE? WHA...?
DANCER COMMITS SUICIDE! STABS SELF IN GRIEF. BODY FOUND AT 4 P.M.
JOHN DRUNE WAS STILL SCREAMING WITH THE LAUGHTER OF MADNESS WHEN THE POLICE BROKE INTO THE DEVIL'S DEN AT DAWN!
THE END



THE DEVIL'S MACHINE

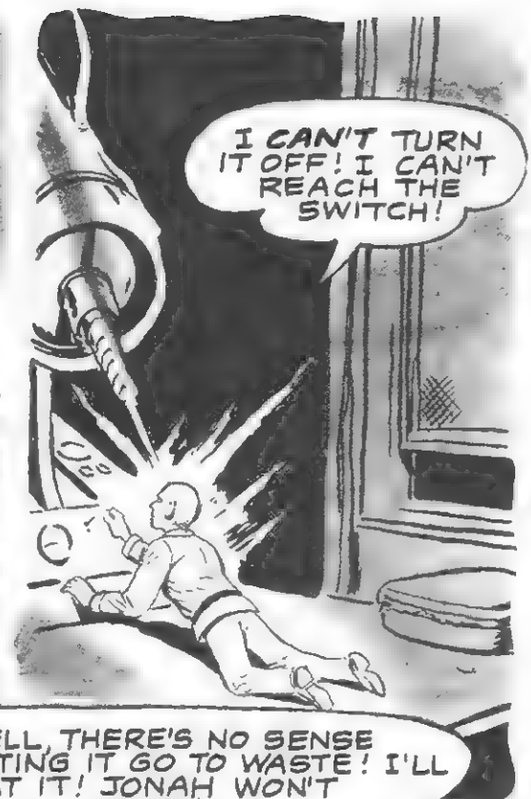
THE NEEDLE SPUTTERS AND... THE BOX GETS SMALLER... AND SMALLER!!!



LOOK AT IT! LESS THAN HALF THE ORIGINAL SIZE! HOW DOES IT WORK?
IT'S SIMPLE! JUST A RAY THAT REARRANGES THE STRUCTURAL MOLECULES IN AN OBJECT TO CHANGE THE OBJECT TO ANY SIZE I DESIRE!
CAN'T YOU SEE WHAT IT'LL MEAN IN SPACE TRAVEL? HEAVY CARGO CAN NOW BE REDUCED TO THE SIZE OF A WATCHBOX AND RESTORED TO ORIGINAL SIZE AT DESTINATION!
I SEE A FORTUNE IN IT FOR US!
NEVER! HOW CAN YOU THINK OF PERSONAL GAIN WHEN WE HAVE THE ANSWER TO WHAT LIES BEYOND THE STARS!
OKAY! OKAY! JUST A LITTLE IDEA! THAT'S ALL!
I HAVE TO GO OUT FOR A WHILE, JONAH! KEEP AN EYE ON THINGS UNTIL I GET BACK!
SURE!
THE FOOL! CAN'T HE SEE WHAT THIS MACHINE MEANS? AND HE'S WILLING TO GIVE IT AWAY!
DEEP IN THOUGHT, JONAH WAS TOO ENGROSSED TO NOTICE WHERE HIS HAND HAD STRAYED!
I'VE GOT TO DO SOMETHING TO GET THAT MACHINE AWAY FROM HIM... BUT HOW?

WHEW, IT'S GETTING WARM IN HERE! SOMETHING MUST HAVE HAPPENED TO THE AIR CONDITIONER!

MY HANDS... THEY'VE SHRUNK! THE RAY! IT'S ON!


I CAN'T TURN IT OFF! I CAN'T REACH THE SWITCH!

LATER...
HMM! MUST'VE LEFT THE RAY ON IN MY EXCITEMENT! HEY, THERE'S JONAH'S SANDWICH-- WONDER WHERE HE WENT?

WELL, THERE'S NO SENSE LETTING IT GO TO WASTE! I'LL EAT IT! JONAH WON'T MIND!

WHAT IS THIS? HOW DID I GET IN HERE... GOT TO DO SOMETHING BUT FAST!

MADE IT--AND THE WATER IS RECEDING!

LIGHT! AT THE OTHER END— I'VE GOT TO GET BACK!
SHEER CLIFFS! AND THE LIGHT'S ON THE OTHER SIDE!
WHAT A BEAST! NEVER SAW ANYTHING LIKE THAT BEFORE!
MEANWHILE...
OWWW! THERE GOES THAT TOOTH AGAIN! I'D BETTER GET TO A DENTIST ONE OF THESE DAYS!
THOSE CLIFFS ARE TOO SHEER TO CLIMB, BUT THIS RAY GUN CAN BLAST STEPS INTO THEM!

NOT BAD... ABOUT HALF WAY UP I'D SAY! JUST A COUPLE HOURS MORE-- AND THEN FREEDOM!

OHH! THIS IS GETTING WORSE INSTEAD OF BETTER! GOT TO DO SOMETHING UNTIL I CAN GET TO THE DENTIST!

IF NOTHING ELSE, THIS WHISKEY WILL DEADEN THE PAIN FOR A WHILE!

THIS STUFF ISN'T WATER-- IT'S TOO STRONG FOR THAT! FUMES ARE KILLING ME!

NO TELLING WHAT CAN HAPPEN IN HERE... I'VE GOT TO GET OUT-- BUT SOON!

CAN'T STOP NOW-- GOTTA KEEP ON!

LATER...
AND... EVERY SO OFTEN A SHARP PAIN SEARS MY TEETH--NEVER HAPPENED BEFORE!
WELL, OPEN WIDE AND WE'LL HAVE A LOOK!
THERE'S SOMETHING IN THERE ALL RIGHT--BUT I CAN'T MAKE OUT WHAT IT IS... IT'S TOO SMALL!
SHORTLY...
WELL THIS PAIN IS TOO INTENSE TO BEAR! I'VE GOT A MACHINE WHICH WILL ENLARGE SMALL OBJECTS... ALL I HAVE TO DO IS REVERSE THE TERMINALS!
OKAY! NOW TO TURN IT ON--IT'S SET UP FOR A SHORT DOSE AND PINPOINT IT ON THE OBJECT, OR MY WHOLE HEAD WILL SWELL UP!
PHEW! IT'S GETTING WARMER IN HERE--WHAT'S GOING ON?
OKAY... I'LL HAVE A LOOK NOW! OUGHT TO BE TO BE ABLE TO... ARGHHH!
NOW YOU REMEMBER THE STORY, DON'T YOU...JONAH IN THE MOUTH OF THE WHALE! THAT WAS IN BIBLICAL TIMES! IN THE YEAR 2000 ANYTHING CAN HAPPEN... AND PROBABLY WILL!
THE END

■ADAM FALCON sailed at dawn, and Margaret Deveral, the girl who was to marry him, stood on the wharfs in the cold mist to wave a good-bye. At the dusk Margaret knelt, stony-eyed, above the still white form that the crawling tide had left crumpled on the beach.

The people of Faring town gathered about, whispering. "The fog hung heavy; mayhap she went ashore on Ghost Reef. Strange that his corpse alone should drift back to Faring harbor—and so swiftly."

The body lay above the tide mark, as if flung by a vagrant wave; slim, but strong and virile in life, now darkly handsome even in death. The eyes were closed, strange to say, so it appeared that he but slept. The seaman's clothes he wore had fragments of seaweed clinging to them.

"Strange," muttered old John Harper, owner of the Sea Lion Inn, and the oldest ex-seaman of Faring town. "He sank deep, for these weeds grow only at the bottom of the ocean, aye, in the coral-grown caves of the sea."

Margaret spoke no word, she but knelt, her hands pressed to her cheeks, eyes wide and staring.

"Take him in your arms, lass, and kiss him," gently urged the people of Faring, "for 'tis what he would have wished, alive."

The girl obeyed mechanically, shuddering at the coldness of the body. Then as her lips touched his, she screamed and recoiled.

"This is not Adam!" she shrieked, staring wildly about her.

The people nodded sadly to each other.

"Her brain is turned," they whispered, and then they lifted the corpse and bore it to the house wherein Adam Falcon had lived—where he had hoped to bring his bride when he returned from his voyage.

And the people brought Margaret along with them, caressing her and soothing her with gentle words. But the girl walked like one in a trance, her eyes still staring in that strange manner.

They laid the body of Adam Falcon on his bed, with death candles at the head and feet, and the salt water from his garments trickled off the bed and splashed on the floor. For it is a superstition in Faring town, as on many dim coasts, that monstrously bad luck will follow if a drowned man's clothes are removed.

And Margaret sat there in the death room and spoke to none, staring fixedly at Adam's dark calm face. And, as she sat, John Gower, a rejected suitor of hers, and a moody, dangerous man, came and, looking over her shoulder said: "Sea death brings a curious change, if that is the Adam Falcon I knew."

Black looks were passed his way, whereat he seemed surprised; and men rose and quietly escorted him to the door.

"You hated Adam Falcon, John Gower," said Tom Leary, "and you hate Margaret because the child preferred a better man than you. Now, by Satan, you'll not be torturing the girl with your calloused talk. Get out and stay!"

Gower scowled darkly at this, but Tom Leary stood up boldly to him, and the men of Faring town back of him, so John turned his back squarely upon them and strode away. Yet to me it had seemed that what he had said had not been meant as a taunt or an insult, but simply the result of a sudden, startling thought.

And as he walked away I heard him mutter to himself: ". . . Alike, and yet strangely unlike him . . ." Night had fallen on Faring town and the windows of the houses blinked through the darkness; through the windows of Adam Falcon's house glimmered the death candles where Margaret and others kept silent watch until dawn. And beyond the friendly warmth of the town's lights, the dusky green titan brooded along the strand, silent now as if in sleep, but ever ready to leap with hungry talons. I wandered down to the beach and reclining on the white sand, gazed out over the slowly heaving expanse which coiled and billowed in drowsy undulations like a sleeping serpent.

The sea—the great, gray, cold-eyed woman of the ages. Her tides spoke to me as they have spoken to me since birth—in the swish of the flat waves along the sand, in the wail of the ocean-bird, in her throbbing silence. *I am very old and very wise* (brooded the sea), *I have no part of man: I slay men and even their bodies I fling back upon the cowering land. There is life in my bosom, but it is not human life* (whispered the sea), *my children hate the sons of men.*

A SHRIEK shattered the stillness and brought me to my feet, gazing wildly about me. Above the stars

gleamed coldly, and their scintillant ghosts sparkled on the ocean's cold surface. The town lay dark and still, save for the death lights in Adam Falcon's house—and the echoes still shuddering through the pulsating silence.

I was among the first to arrive at the door of the death room and there halted aghast with the rest. Margaret Deveral lay dead upon the floor, her slender form crushed like a slim ship among shoals, and crouching over her, cradling her in his arms, was John Gower, the gleam of insanity in his wide eyes. And the death candles still flickered and leaped, but no corpse lay on Adam Falcon's bed.

"God's mercy!" gasped Tom Leary. "John Gower, ye fiend from hell, what devil's work is this?"

Gower looked up.

"I told you," he shrieked. "She knew—and I knew—'twas not Adam Falcon, that cold monster flung up by the mocking waves! 'Tis some demon inhabiting his corpse! Hark—I sought my bed and tried to sleep, but each time there came the thought of this soft girl sitting beside that cold inhuman thing you thought her lover, and at last I rose and came to the window. Margaret sat, drowsing, and the others, fools that they were, slept in other parts of the house. And as I watched . . . "

He shook as a wave of shuddering passed over him.

"As I watched, Adam's eyes opened, and the corpse rose swift stealthy from the bed where it lay. I stood without the window, frozen, helpless, and the ghastly thing stole upon the unknowing girl, with frightful eyes burning with hellish light and snaky arms outstretched. Then, she woke and screamed and then—oh Mother of God!—the dead man lapped her in his terrible arms, and she died without a sound."

Gower's voice died out into incoherent gibberings, and he rocked the dead girl gently to and fro like a mother with a child.

Tom Leary shook him. "Where is the corpse?"

"He fled into the night," said John Gower tonelessly.

Men looked at each other, bewildered.

"He lies," muttered they, deep in their beards. "He has slain Margaret himself and hidden the corpse somewhere to bear out his ghastly tale."

A sullen snarl shook the throng, and as one man they turned and looked where, on Hangman's Hill overlooking the bay, Lie-lip Canool's bleached skeleton glimmered against the stars.

They took the dead girl from Gower's arms, though he clung to her, and laid her gently on the bed between the candles meant for Adam Falcon. Still she lay, and white, and men and women whispered that she seemed more like one drowned than one crushed to death.

WE BORE John Gower through the village streets, he not resisting; but seeming to walk in a daze, muttering to himself. But in the square, Tom Leary halted.

"This is a strange tale Gower told us," said he, "and doubtless a lie. Still, I am not a man to be hanging another without certainty. Therefore, let us place him in the stocks for safekeeping, while we search for Adam's corpse. Time enough for hanging afterwards."

So this was done and as we turned away, I looked back upon John Gower, who sat, head bowed upon his breast, like a man who is weary unto death.

So, under the dim wharfs and in the attics of houses and among stranded hulls we searched for Adam Falcon's corpse. Back up into the hills behind the town our hunt lead us, where we broke up into groups and couples and scattered out over the barren downs.

My companion was Michael Hansen, and we had gotten so far apart that the darkness cloaked him from me, when he gave a sudden

shout. I started toward him, and then the shout broke into a shriek and the shriek died off into grisly silence. Michael Hansen lay dead on the earth, and a dim form slunk away in the gloom as I stood above the corpse, my flesh crawling.

Tom Leary and the rest came on the run and gathered about, swearing that John Gower had done this deed, also.

"He has escaped, somehow, from the stocks," said they, and we legged it for the village at top speed.

Aye, John Gower had escaped from the stocks and from his townsmen's hate and from all the sorrows of life. He sat as we had left him, head bowed upon his breast; but One had come to him in the darkness, and, though all his bones were broken, he seemed like a drowned man.

Then stark horror fell like a thick fog on Faring town. We clustered about the stocks, struck silent, till shrieks from a house on the outskirts of the village told us that the horror had struck again, and, rushing there, we found red destruction and death. And a maniac woman who whimpered before she died that Adam Falcon's corpse had broken through the window, flaming-eyed and horrible, to rend and slay. A green slime fouled the room and fragments of seaweed clung to the window sill.

Then fear, unreasoning and shameless, took possession of the men of Faring town, and they fled to their separate houses, where they locked and bolted doors and windows and crouched behind them, weapons trembling in their hands and black terror in their souls. For what weapon can slay the dead?

And through the deathly night, horror stalked through Faring town and hunted the sons of men. Men shuddered and dared not even look forth when the crash of a door or window told of the entrance of the fiend into dome wretch's cottage, when shrieks and gibberings told of its grisly deeds therein.

YET THERE WAS one man who did not shut himself behind doors to be there slaughtered like a sheep. I was never a brave man, nor was it courage that sent me out into the ghastly night. No, it was the driving power of a Thought, a Thought which had birth in my brain as I looked on the dead face of Michael Hansen. A vague and illusive thing it was, a hovering and an almost-being—but not quite. Somewhere at the back of my skull it lurked, and I could not rest until I had proved or disproved that which I could not even formulate into a concrete theory.

So, with my brain in strange and chaotic condition, I stole through the shadows, warily. Mayhap the sea, strange and fickle even to her chosen, had whispered something to my inner mind, had betrayed her own. I know not.

But all through the dark hours I prowled along the beach, and, when in the first gray light of the early dawn, a fiendish shape came striding down to the shore, I was waiting there.

To all seeming it was Adam Falcon's corpse, animated by some horrid life, which fronted me there in the gray gloom. The eyes were open now, and they glimmered with a cold light, like the reflections of some deep sea hell. And I knew that it was not Adam Falcon who faced me.

"Sea fiend," I said in an unsteady voice, "I know not how you came by Adam Falcon's apparel. I know not whether his ship went upon the rocks, or whether he fell overboard, or whether you climbed up the strake and over the rail and dragged him from his own deck. Nor do I know by what foul ocean magic you twisted your devil's features into a likeness of his.

"But this I know. Adam Falcon sleeps in peace beneath the blue tides. You are not he. That I suspected—now I know. This horror has come upon Earth of yore—so long ago that all men have forgotten the tales; all except such as I, whom

men name fool. I know, and knowing, I fear you not, and here I slay you, for though you are not human, you may be slain by a man who does not fear you—even though that man be only a youth and considered strange and foolish. You have left your demon's mark upon the land; God alone knows how many souls you have reft, how many brains you have shattered this night. The ancients said your kind could do harm only in the form of men, on land. Aye, you tricked the sons of men—were borne into their midst by kind and gentle hands—by men who knew not they carried a monster from the abysses.

"Now, you have worked your will, and the sun will soon rise. Before that time you must be far below the green waters, basking in the accursed caverns that human eye has never looked upon save in death. There lies the sea and safety; I alone bar the way."

He came upon me like a towering wave, and his arms were like green serpents about me. I knew they were crushing me; yet I felt as if I were drowning instead, and even then understood the expression that had puzzled me on Michael Hansen's face—that of a drowned man.

I was looking into the inhuman eyes of the monster, and it was as if I gazed into untold depths of oceans—depths into which I should presently tumble and drown. And I felt scales.

Neck, arm, and shoulder he gripped me, bending me back to break my spine, and I drove my knife into his body again—and again—and again. He roared once, the only sound I ever heard him make, and it was like the roar of the tides among the shoals. Like the pressure of a hundred fathoms of green water was the grasp upon my body and limbs, and then, as I thrust again, he gave way and crumpled to the beach.

He lay there writhing and then was still, and already he had begun to change. Merman, the ancients named his kind, knowing they were endowed with strange attributes, one of which was the ability to take the full form of a man if lifted from the ocean by the hands of men. I bent and tore the human clothing from thing. And the first gleams of the sun fell upon a slimy and moldering mass of seaweed, from which stared two hideous dead eyes—a formless bulk that lay at the water's edge, where the first high wave would bear it back to that from which it came: the cold jade ocean deeps. ●

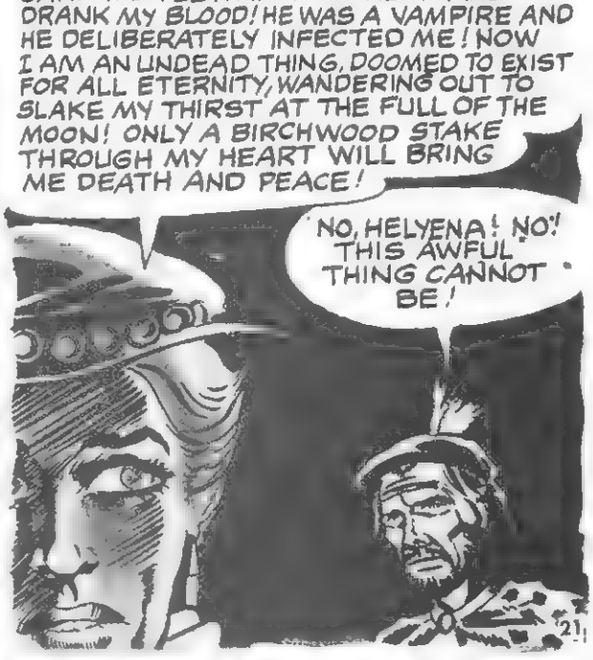
GATHER AROUND, FOLKS! HERE'S THE **NAMELESS ONE** AGAIN WITH A CHARMING LITTLE STORY OF DREAD AND TERROR WELL CALCULATED TO MAKE YOUR BLOOD RUN COLD! LET'S GO BACK INTO THE YEARS! IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY, A HUNGARIAN NOBLE, A WIDOWER WITH ONE SON DWELT IN HIS ANCESTRAL CASTLE IN THE TRANSYLVANIAN MOUNTAINS! **COUNT OTTO SANDOR** LOST HIS HEART TO THE LOVELY **HELYENA** WHO WAS UNHAPPILY MARRIED TO A NEIGHBORING BARON! THEIR FRUITLESS LOVE WAS TO LEAD THEM TO YEARS TOGETHER IN...

HOUSE OF VAMPIRES

IT CAN'T BE! YOU'VE BEEN DEAD FOR **CENTURIES!**

Reynosa

ONE DAY, HELYENA MET HER NOBLE ADMIRER WITH DISQUIETING NEWS.



BUT... THE SARDONIC HAND OF FATE INTERVENED WITH A TWIST THAT BROUGHT FRUSTRATION TO BOTH--- THE MALIGN DEMONS THAT ARRANGED THE DESTINY OF THESE TWO DECREED THAT THEY WOULD NEVER AWAKE AT THE SAME TIME...

SLOWLY, THE STRANGE FIGURE MAKES ITS WAY UP THE MOULDY STAIRS...
ANOTHER JOHANN AWAITS HIM IN THE ANCIENT KITCHEN--TWELVE GENERATIONS REMOVED FROM THE ORIGINAL SERVITOR...
I WAS EXPECTING YOU, SIR! IT IS THE NIGHT FOR YOUR COMING!
YOU ARE A FAITHFUL FELLOW, JOHANN, AS WERE YOUR FATHERS BEFORE YOU!
SUDDENLY...
SOMEONE'S IN THE COURTYARD!
SEE WHO IT IS... I SHALL KEEP OUT OF SIGHT!
THE SERVANT ENCOUNTERS A YOUNG COUPLE...
WE ARE AMERICANS, ON OUR HONEYMOON! OUR CAR BROKE DOWN! CAN YOU GIVE US SHELTER FOR THE NIGHT?
WE HAVE FEW COMFORTS IN OLD CASTLE SANDOR, SIR, BUT YOU ARE WELCOME TO ENTER!
CASTLE SANDOR! THIS MUST BE THE HOME OF MY ANCESTORS! MY GREAT-GREAT GRANDFATHER EMIGRATED TO AMERICA FROM AROUND HERE! IT'S THE PLACE I'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR!
LED BY JOHANN, THE TWO YOUNG PEOPLE ENTER THE OLD CASTLE! IN THE GREAT HALL THEY PAUSE BEFORE A PORTRAIT OF THE 16TH CENTURY NOBLEMAN! THEY READ THE INSCRIPTION...
IT READS: COUNT OTTO SANDOR-1554! EXCEPT FOR THE BEARD, IT IS A PERFECT LIKENESS OF YOU, ARTHUR, ONLY YOUR NAME IS SANDERS!
MY OWN FLESH AND BLOOD BACK HERE AGAIN AFTER ALL THESE CENTURIES...

AS THEY GO UPSTAIRS TO THEIR ROOM...
YOU KNOW-- I FEEL AS IF THIS WHOLE CASTLE IS FAMILIAR TO ME... AS IF I'VE BEEN HERE BEFORE!
NONSENSE, ARTHUR, YOU KNOW YOU'VE NEVER BEEN OUT OF GRAND RAPIDS BEFORE!

LATER...
HELEN, YOU MAKE YOURSELF COMFORTABLE AND REST A BIT! I'M FASCINATED BY THIS CASTLE! I'M GOING TO LOOK AROUND FOR A WHILE!

MEANWHILE, HIS BLOOD-LUST SLACKENED FOR A TIME, COUNT SANDOR DESCENDS AGAIN TO THE HIDDEN CRYPT...
HELYENA, MY BELOVED, WOULD THAT YOU WERE AWAKE THE SAME TIME AS I-- JUST ONCE IN THESE MANY CENTURIES!

IT IS AS IF THAT YOUNG COUPLE ABOVE ARE THE VERY REINCARNATION OF US! HE IS MY VERY OWN DESCENDANT AND HIS BRIDE SEEMS CAST IN YOUR OWN MOLD!

THEN, HIS KEEN EARS SENSES...
...FOOTSTEPS!! CAN THAT BE JOHANN-- DISOBEYING MY ORDERS BY COMING TO THIS FORBIDDEN PLACE...?

IT IS THE AMERICAN!

IF HE LOOKS IN THE CASKETS HE'LL KNOW THAT THIS IS A HAUNT OF VAMPIRES-- AND HE WOULD SPREAD THE ALARM ALL OVER THE COUNTRYSIDE! THAT WOULD BE THE END OF US!

IN DESPERATION, SANDOR LEAPS UPON THE YOUNG MAN FROM BEHIND...

HE OBTAINS POSSESSION OF THE FLASHLIGHT AND USES IT AS A WEAPON...
OOOF!

I'LL LEAVE THIS FELLOW OUT HERE IN THE COURTYARD 'TIL HE COMES TO HIS SENSES!

I MUST GET THEM BOTH OUT OF THE CASTLE! NOW I'LL GO UP THERE AND SCARE THE GIRL--

SANDOR SLIDES BACK A SECRET PANEL...
I'LL FRIGHTEN HER OUT OF HER WITS--

SENSING HIS PRESENCE THE GIRL TURNS, INSTEAD OF BEING SCARED, SHE THINKS HE IS HER HUSBAND!
WHY, ARTHUR, YOU STARTLED ME! WHAT ARE YOU DOING IN THAT BEARD AND THOSE OLD-FASHIONED CLOTHES?

SHE GENTLY TOUCHES THE MAN'S FACE...
YOU DON'T HAVE TO GET BACK INTO THE ATMOSPHERE OF THIS OLD CASTLE SO AUTHENTICALLY, EVEN IF IT WAS YOUR ANCESTORS'-- AI-EEE-EEE!

YOUR FACE IS ICY-CLAMMY! YOU-YOU'RE NOT ARTHUR!

YOU'RE THE MAN IN THE PORTRAIT DOWNSTAIRS-- BUT YOU'VE BEEN DEAD FOR FOUR HUNDRED YEARS!
EXACTLY, MY DEAR!

TERRIFIED, SHE CLIMBS INTO THE WINDOW HIGH IN THE CASTLE WALL...
Y-YOU'RE A GHOST... A DEVIL!
DON'T JUMP!

SANDOR KNOWS THAT THE DROP FROM THE WINDOW IS SHEER AND MURDEROUS, SO HE LUNGES FORWARD AND GRABS THE HYSTERICAL GIRL...
COME BACK HERE! I DON'T WANT YOU TO DIE!

HE DRAGS THE FAINTING GIRL BACK INTO THE ROOM... THEN HE HEARS A VOICE BEHIND HIM...
EXCELLENT! NOW WE'LL BOTH FEAST ON HER BLOOD!

HELYENA!
SHE HAS LEFT HER COFFIN ON THE SAME NIGHT I LEFT MINE FOR THE FIRST TIME IN FOUR CENTURIES... AND THE BITTER IRONY OF IT IS THAT THIS TIME, I DON'T WANT HER HERE!

SHE HAS NOT CONQUERED HER THIRST AS I HAVE TRIUMPHED OVER MINE IN REGARD TO THESE TWO YOUNG PEOPLE! I CANNOT HARM THEM-- HE'S MY OWN DESCENDANT, AND HIS LOVELY BRIDE...

THE FEMALE VAMPIRE GLIDES FORWARD...
WE SHALL OPEN HER VEINS...
NO, HELYENA! I FORBID IT!

I MUST HAVE HER BLOOD! YOU AND I WILL SLAKE OUR THIRST, MY LOVE!

NO, I TELL YOU! LOVE CANNOT ENDURE WHEN BASED ON A FOUL CURSE SUCH AS OURS! WE ARE DAMNED, MY SWEET!

THE GIRL REVIVES FROM HER FAINT AND CLAMPS HER HAND TO HER NECK...
O-O-OH!

SHE RACES FROM THE ROOM...
WE MUST SLAY THAT GIRL BEFORE SHE CAN BETRAY US! SHE WILL GO TO THE VILLAGE AND SOON A MOB OF PEASANTS WILL BE UPON US!
NO--THERE IS A BETTER WAY!

QUICKLY SEIZING HELYENA, SANDOR CARRIES HER FORCIBLY DOWN THE SECRET STAIRCASE...
WHAT ARE YOU DOING? PUT ME DOWN!

FROM THE DYING EMBERS OF THE FIRE IN THE ANCIENT KITCHEN, SANDOR PLUCKS TWO BIRCHWOOD STICKS WITH THEIR ENDS CHARRED TO FINE POINTS...
W-WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?
I SHALL RELEASE US FROM OUR CURSE!

DESPITE HELYENA'S STRUGGLES, HE PUTS HER BACK INTO HER COFFIN IN THE CRYPT...
THE GIRL HAS BY NOW FOUND HER HUSBAND AND AROUSED THE VILLAGERS---THEY WILL SOON COME HERE--AND YOU KNOW WHAT THAT WILL MEAN...

NO, OTTO, NO! ALL ETERNITY LIES BEFORE US, THERE IS YET TIME! GO TO THE COURTYARD... KILL THEM!
WE ARE THE UNDEAD, WHILE THEY ARE YOUNG, ALIVE AND NORMAL! IF DEATH MUST COME, LET IT COME TO US! FAREWELL, MY BELOVED!

SANDOR PLUNGES THE STAKE INTO HER HEART...
IN DEATH, THERE WILL BE PEACE... AT LAST!

THEN HE GETS INTO HIS OWN COFFIN...

...AND DRIVES THE SECOND STAKE INTO HIS OWN BREAST...

SOON...THE VILLAGERS ARRIVE...
I'LL SHOW YOU WHERE THEY ARE!
WE'RE PREPARED!

BUT IN THE TWIN COFFINS THEY FIND NO TRACE OF SANDOR AND HELYENA... JUST TWO STICKS AND TWO SMALL PILES OF VERY FINE DUST...
UGH! LET'S GET OUT OF THIS AWFUL PLACE!

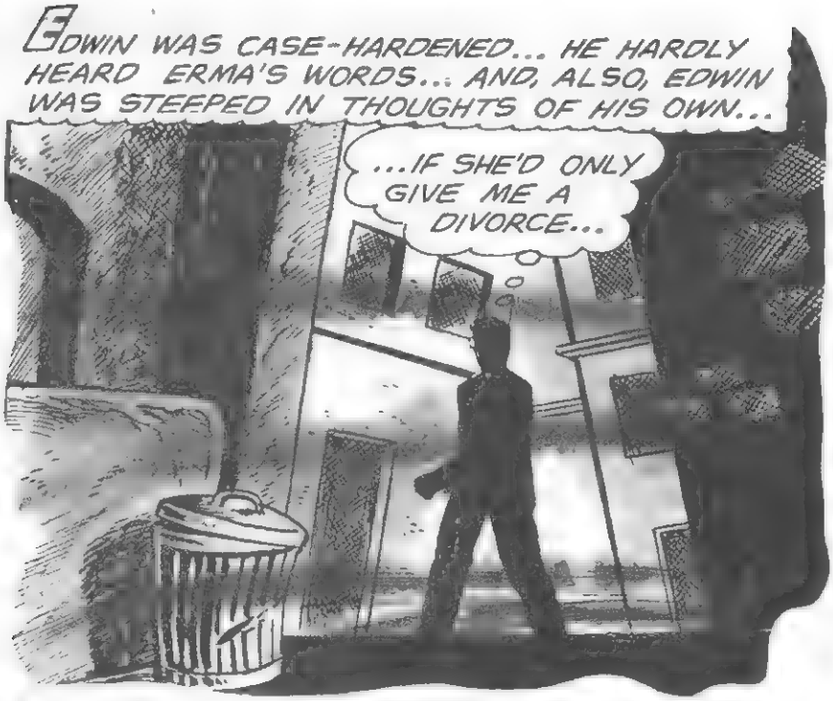
SO THE NEWLYWEDS TAKE A ROOM AT THE VILLAGE INN... BUT HELYENA'S BITE HAS TAKEN EFFECT AND THAT NIGHT, AS THE FULL MOON'S RAYS SPLASH THROUGH THE WINDOWS, THE YOUNG BRIDE SINKS HER TEETH INTO HER SLEEPING HUSBAND'S NECK! ...

SO YOU SEE, FOLKS... TWO NEW VAMPIRES ARE BORN! CAN'T GET AWAY FROM THAT OLD CURSE, EH? HEH! HEH! LOOK ME UP IN THE NEXT ISSUE... I'LL HAVE ANOTHER BLOOD-CURDLING TALE TO TELL YOU...
THE END!

THE GHOUL

EVIL BEGETS EVIL— AND IN THE WICKED PLOTTING OF EDWIN BLACK THERE LURKED THE BIRTH OF HORRIBLE TERROR.. AND THE DEATH OF ALL INVOLVED!

EDWIN BLACK HAD A SECRET... HE HATED HIS WIFE ERMA! SHE ALONE WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS, FOR EDWIN WAS A MILD-MANNERED MAN, BUT HIS WIFE WAS A CONSTANT SHARP-TONGUED NAG...


EDWIN WAS CASE-HARDENED... HE HARDLY HEARD ERMA'S WORDS... AND, ALSO, EDWIN WAS STEEPED IN THOUGHTS OF HIS OWN...
...IF SHE'D ONLY GIVE ME A DIVORCE...

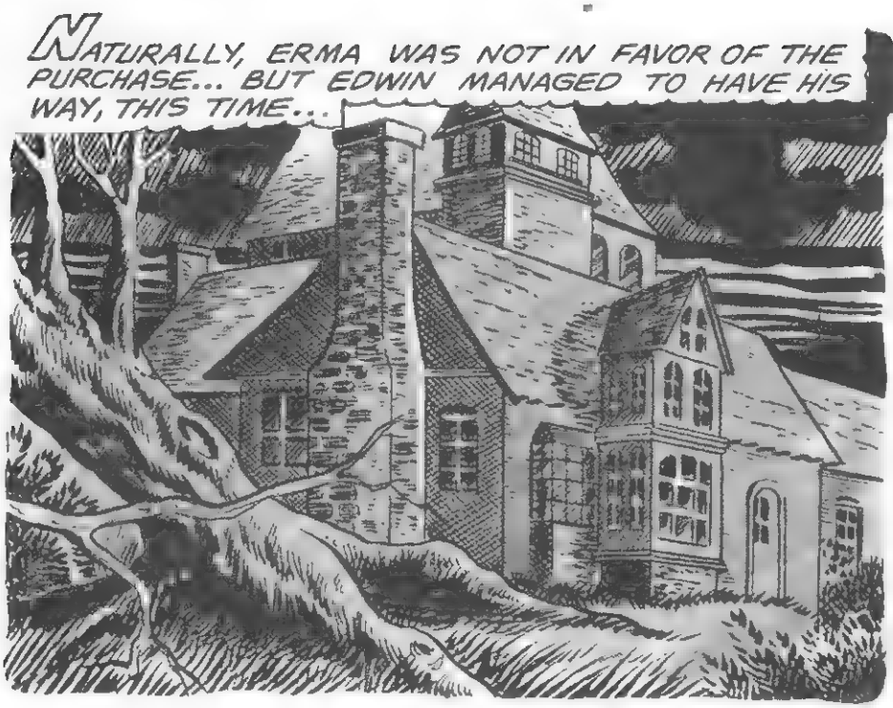
BUT SHE WON'T... SHE'D NEVER LET ME GO! EVEN DEATH WOULDN'T TAKE HER AWAY FROM ME! DEATH! DEATH...

NO... I MUSTN'T THINK SUCH THINGS! BUT IT'S TRUE! IF SHE DIED... NO, NO... WHAT'S COMING OVER ME?

STILL IT'S TRUE! I WISH SHE WAS DEAD! THEN I'D HAVE PEACE! NO MORE NAGGING! I'LL KILL HER MYSELF! I KNOW HOW TO DO IT!

HELLO, GEORGE? THIS IS EDWIN BLACK! LOOK, OLD MAN, YOU'RE A REAL ESTATE BROKER... WHAT DO YOU HAVE FOR ME IN NEW ENGLAND?
YOU'RE IN LUCK! I HAVE A WONDERFUL BUY...

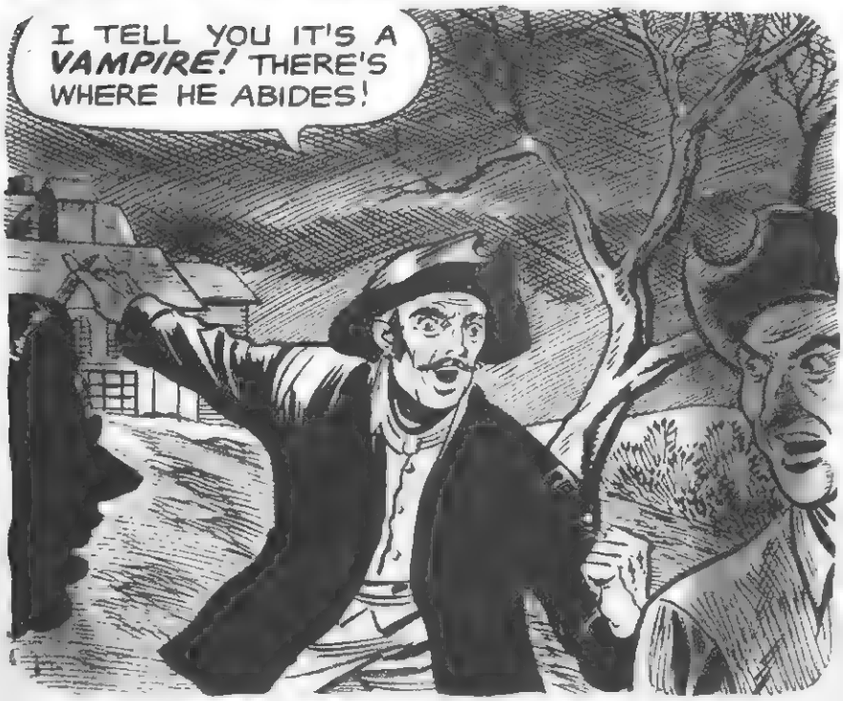
NOW! NOW WE'LL SEE IF I CAN HAVE PEACE AND QUIET! WAIT UNTIL YOU HEAR ABOUT THIS, ERMA!

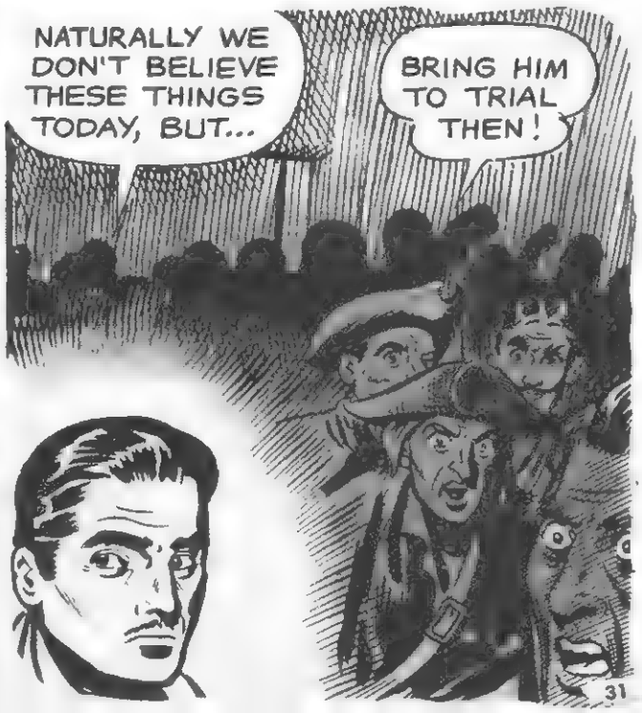

NATURALLY, ERMA WAS NOT IN FAVOR OF THE PURCHASE... BUT EDWIN MANAGED TO HAVE HIS WAY, THIS TIME...

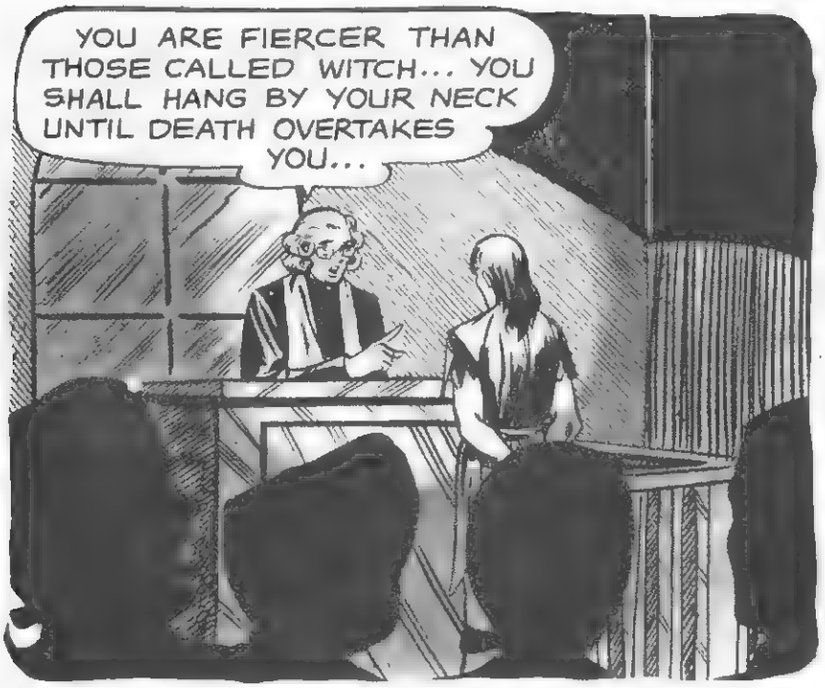
...NEVER HEARD OF SUCH FOOLISHNESS!
YOU'LL ENJOY THIS PLACE, MRS. BLACK...

...IT HAS AN INTERESTING HISTORY DATING BACK TO THE PILGRIMS! ONLY FOLKLORE, OF COURSE, BUT GIVES THE HOUSE A LOT OF COLOR...

...IT SEEMS THAT THERE WAS A MOST UNUSUAL MURDERER IN THAT NEIGHBORHOOD, ONE WHO HELD THE VILLAGE TERROR-BOUND...
S-SHE'S DEAD!

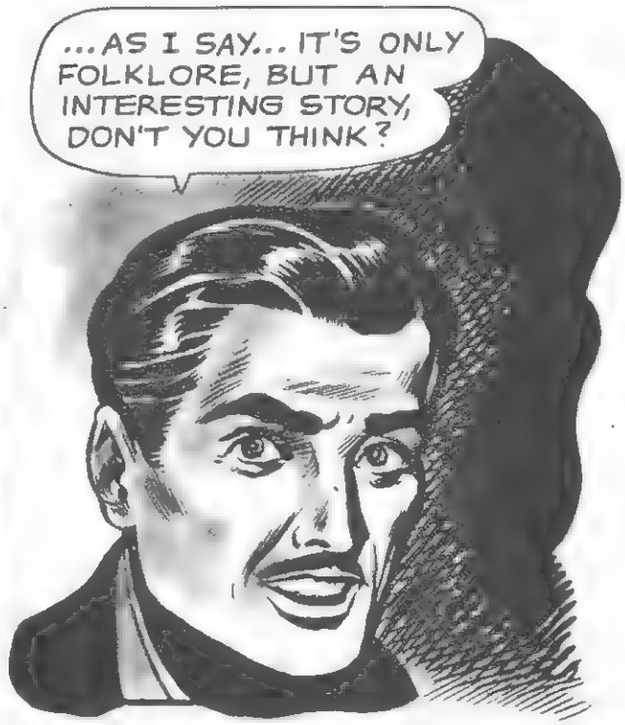

I TELL YOU IT'S A VAMPIRE! THERE'S WHERE HE ABIDES!


NATURALLY WE DON'T BELIEVE THESE THINGS TODAY, BUT...
BRING HIM TO TRIAL THEN!

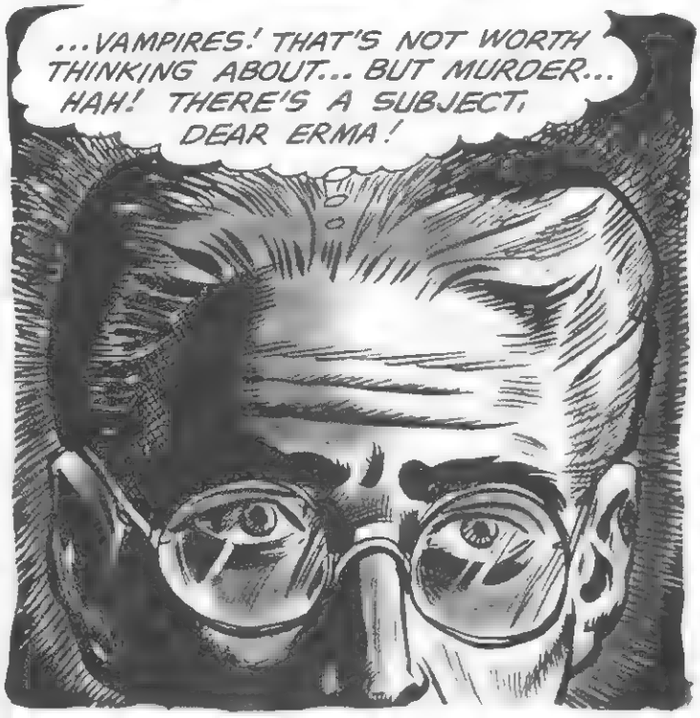

YOU ARE FIERCER THAN THOSE CALLED WITCH... YOU SHALL HANG BY YOUR NECK UNTIL DEATH OVERTAKES YOU...

IT IS NOT ENOUGH... HE MUST HAVE THE STAKE THROUGH HIS HEART AS WELL!

DRIVE IT DEEP, FRIEND...
DON'T WORRY! HE'LL NEVER ROAM THIS EARTH AGAIN AFTER THIS...


...AS I SAY... IT'S ONLY FOLKLORE, BUT AN INTERESTING STORY, DON'T YOU THINK?

NONSENSE! VAMPIRES! MURDER! WHAT A WAY TO SELL A HOUSE!
BUT WE'VE ALREADY BOUGHT THE HOUSE, DEAR...


...VAMPIRES! THAT'S NOT WORTH THINKING ABOUT... BUT MURDER... HAH! THERE'S A SUBJECT, DEAR ERMA!

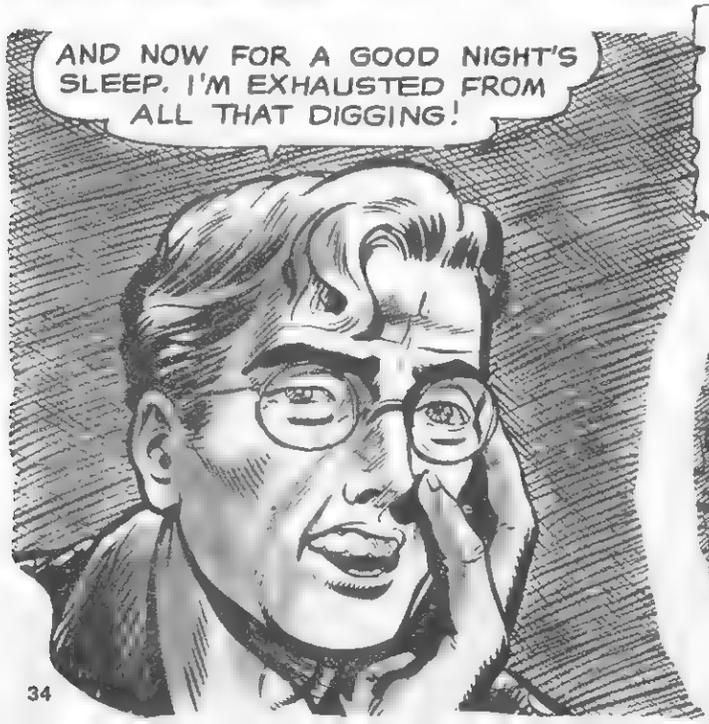
EDWIN HAD IT ALL THOUGHT OUT.. AFTER A MONTH OR SO AT THE NEW ADDRESS, HE SECRETLY MADE SEVERAL PHONE CALLS TO FRIENDS AND RELATIVES... EACH OF THE SAME NATURE!
...YES, SHE'LL BE LEAVING SOON. OH, YOU KNOW ERMA, SHE ALWAYS DID LIKE CALIFORNIA, AND SHE DESERVES A VACATION!
BUT I WILL BE THE ONE TO HAVE THE REAL VACATION! I'LL BURY HER HERE!
NOW, DEAR ERMA! ARE YOU READY FOR YOUR EXTENDED VACATION?
WHERE ARE YOU? DID YOU LOCK THE BACK DOOR? DID YOU PUT THE LIGHTS OUT IN THE GARAGE?
I DID ALL THAT, DEAR!
EDWIN! ARE YOU MAD? PUT THAT DOWN THIS INSTANT!
THE LAST TIME I'LL HAVE TO LISTEN TO THAT SCREECHING VOICE!
AT LAST... PEACE! NOW MY LIFE WILL BE SERENE... NO LONGER WILL I HAVE TO HEAR YOU, DEAR ERMA!

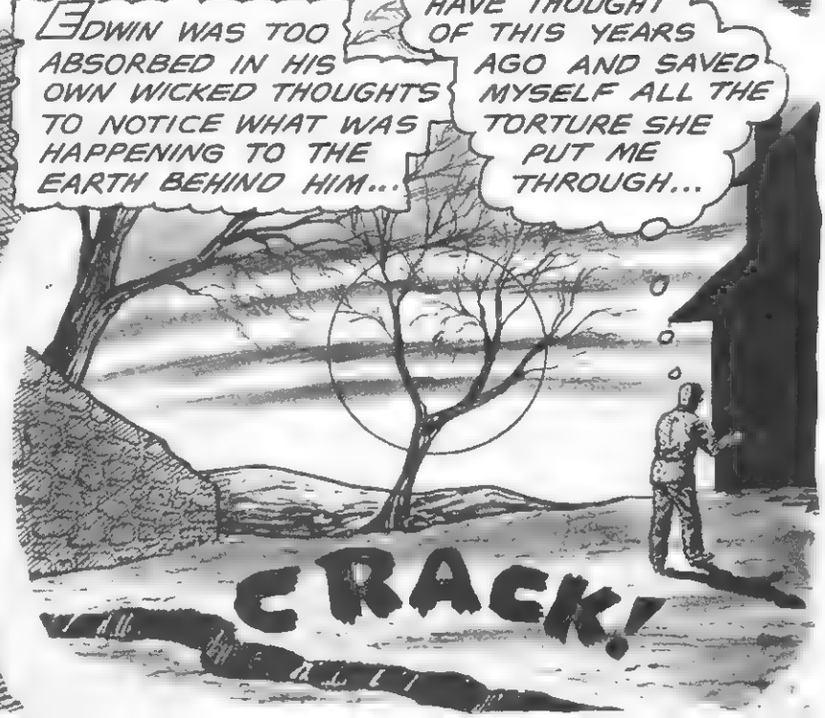
ALMOST GLEEFULLY, EDWIN DRAGGED THE GRIM OBJECT INTO THE NIGHT SHADOWS OF THE BACK YARD...
"WHERE'S ERMA?" THEY'LL ASK... WHY, DIDN'T YOU HEAR? ERMA IS TAKING A VACATION...

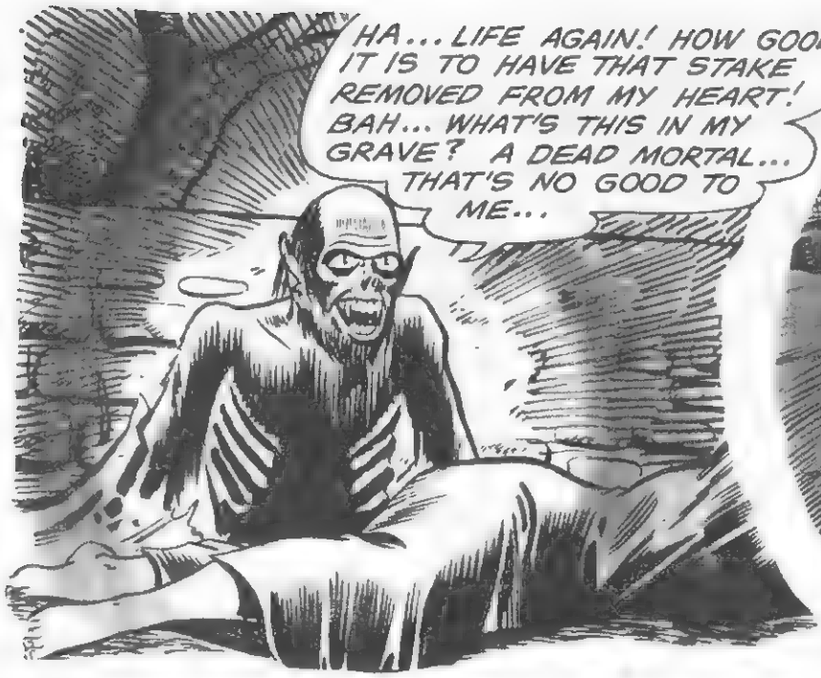
YES, DEAR ERMA HAS GONE FOR A NICE LONG REST! NO PLACE LIKE CALIFORNIA TO REST UP! HA-HA...

WHAT IS THIS DARN STAKE DOING HERE? UP IT COMES. I NEED THIS SPACE!

REST WELL, DEAR WIFE! AND SO WILL I! YOU'LL NEVER BE MISSED! NEVER!


AND NOW FOR A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP. I'M EXHAUSTED FROM ALL THAT DIGGING!


EDWIN WAS TOO ABSORBED IN HIS OWN WICKED THOUGHTS TO NOTICE WHAT WAS HAPPENING TO THE EARTH BEHIND HIM...
I SHOULD HAVE THOUGHT OF THIS YEARS AGO AND SAVED MYSELF ALL THE TORTURE SHE PUT ME THROUGH...
CRACK!


HA... LIFE AGAIN! HOW GOOD IT IS TO HAVE THAT STAKE REMOVED FROM MY HEART! BAH... WHAT'S THIS IN MY GRAVE? A DEAD MORTAL... THAT'S NO GOOD TO ME...

I MUST HAVE A LIVING CREATURE... IF I AM TO LIVE...

WHA... NO! NO!
IT MUST BE! IT IS YOUR LIFE OR MINE—AND I WISH TO LIVE!

BAH! MORTALS DIE SO EASILY... AND SO PERMANENTLY!

DAWN... I MUST GO BACK TO MY CHAMBER AND REST—BUT TOMORROW NIGHT I SHALL LIVE AGAIN!

DAYLIGHT SPREAD OVER A SCENE OF HORROR... VIOLENT DEATH IS TWICE AS GRIM IN SUNSHINE... AND AS IF KNOWING, THE SUN HID BEHIND THE MORNING CLOUDS...

...BUT IN THE WORLD OF HONEST MEN, THERE'S ALWAYS WORK TO BE DONE...
GREAT SCOTT, FELLOWS — LOOK!
SOMEONE CALL THE SHERIFF!

THIS IS JENKINS OF THE FENCING CREW, SHERIFF! YOU'D BETTER COME OVER TO THE OLD VAMPIRE ESTATE RIGHT AWAY!

...WITHIN A HALF HOUR THE STORY OF ERMA AND EDWIN BLACK WAS DRAWING TO A CLOSE...
SHE WAS MURDERED ALL RIGHT!
HOW ABOUT THE HUSBAND?

LOOKED LIKE A HEART ATTACK TO ME...
VERY LIKELY. SHOCK FROM SEEING HIS WIFE... OR FROM MURDERING HER HIMSELF!

YOU REALLY THINK THAT BLACK FELLOW MURDERED HIS WIFE?
YES. LIKE THE SHERIFF SAID... WHO ELSE WOULD WANT TO? NOT ANOTHER HOUSE AROUND HERE FOR MILES! BETTER DRIVE THOSE STAKES IN GOOD, PERKINS, SO THEY'LL WEATHER ALL THE STORMS 'ROUND THESE PARTS...

FATE WORKS IN STRANGE WAYS... LITTLE DID THOSE CREWMEN KNOW THEY HAD PINNED A VAMPIRE DEEP INTO EVERLASTING DARKNESS TO WHICH HE BELONGED! BUT WHO CAN SAY IF HE WILL EVER BE RELEASED AGAIN!
The End

9, THE COFFIN

I AM A COFFIN, AND THIS IS MY STORY! A STORY OF PAIN AND PATIENCE, HORROR AND HAPPINESS, LIFE AND DEATH! I HAVE SEEN THE SEAMY SIDE OF LIFE AND —(CHUCKLE)— DEATH! I **KNOW** THE **UNKNOWABLE**! I HAVE BEEN WET WITH TEARS, AND FELT THE CRUEL SLITHER OF THE WORMS IN MY ENTRAILS! IN A WAY I AM **ALL** COFFINS, AND THUS I SPEAK FOR **ALL** COFFINS! YOU DO NOT NEED ME **NOW**, OR EVEN WANT ME AROUND, BUT YOU WILL SOME DAY! AND I'LL BE THERE! I'LL BE READY, WAITING— **FOR YOU....**

IS THIS YOU?

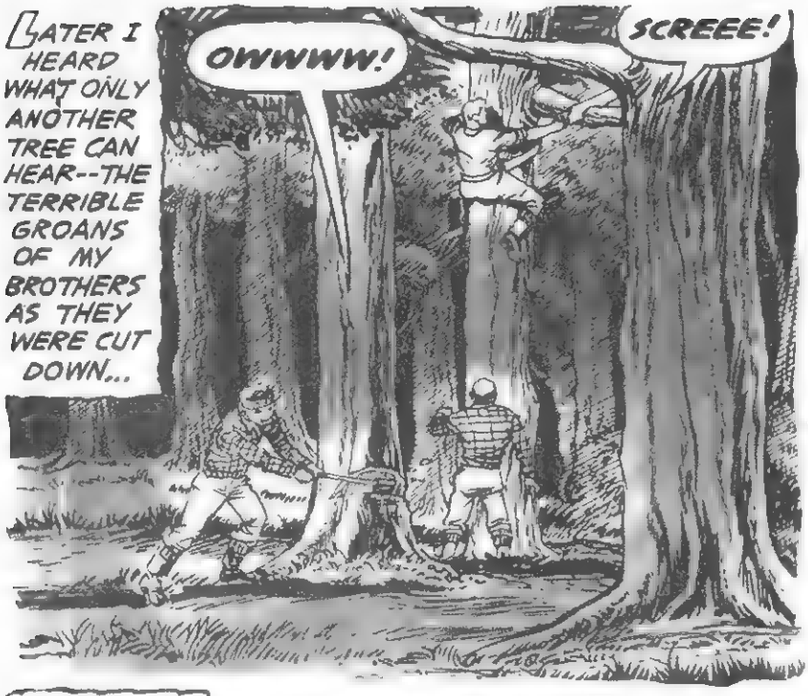
A HUNDRED YEARS AGO I WAS A STURDY YOUNG OAK! ONCE I SHELTERED THE SAVAGES WHO WAITED FOR A WAGON TRAIN...

UGH! WAGON COME NOW! WE KILL ALL WHITE SETTLERS!

AND I WATCHED THE SLAUGHTER AS THE POOR WRETCHES DIED UNDER THE TOMAHAWKS OF THE SAVAGES... THEY DIED HARD AND BLOODILY, THEIR HAIR WRENCHED FROM THEIR SCALPS, ARROWS IN THEIR VITALS...

UGNNNNN—

EEEEEEE—


LATER I HEARD WHAT ONLY ANOTHER TREE CAN HEAR--THE TERRIBLE GROANS OF MY BROTHERS AS THEY WERE CUT DOWN...
OWWWW!
SCREEE!

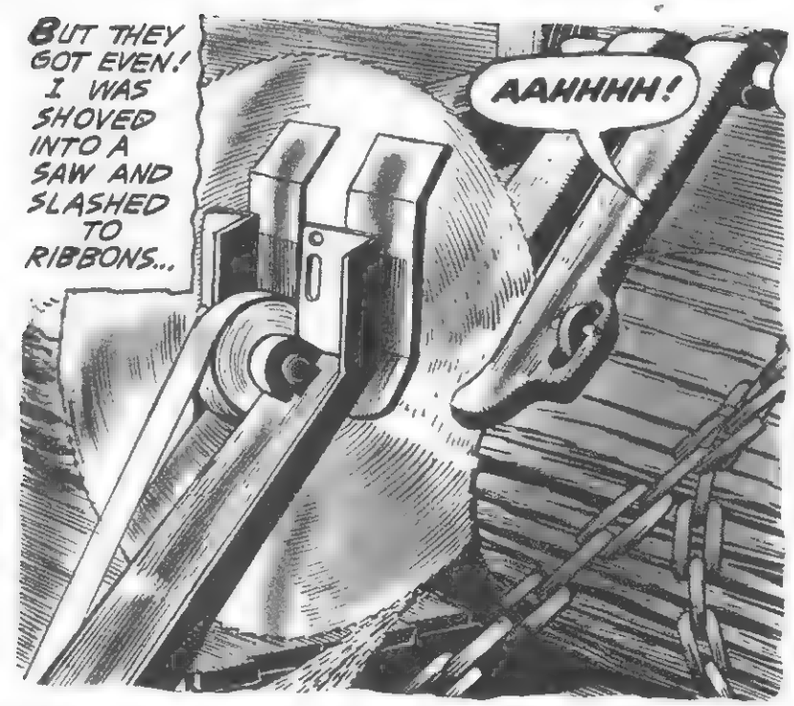
THEN MY TURN CAME, AS I HAD ALWAYS KNOWN IT WOULD! I, TOO, SCREAMED AS THE CRUEL STEEL BIT INTO ME...
OHHH!

I SCREAMED AND SCREAMED AS I FELL CRASHING TO THE GRANITE HARD EARTH...
TIMBER! RUN FOR IT!
GET OUT OF THE WAY! THIS ONE IS A WHOPPER!
AIEEEE!

I WAS DRAGGED ROUGHLY TO A LONG CHUTE LEADING DOWN TO THE RIVER...
GIDDAP, BESS, TILLIE! MOVE! WE GOT TO GIT THESE LOGS DOWN THE RIVER BEFORE THE FREEZEUP!

THEN I WENT WHIRLING DOWN AND DOWN! BUT JUST AS I REACHED THE BOTTOM OF THE CHUTE I SAW A CHANCE FOR REVENGE...
YIIIII--MY FOOT CAUGHT! I'LL BE KILLED! HELP!

IT WAS ONE OF THE MEN WHO HAD CUT ME DOWN! NOW I SMASHED HIM INTO A GREASY RED PULP...
AGHHH--UHHHH!


BUT THEY GOT EVEN! I WAS SHOVED INTO A SAW AND SLASHED TO RIBBONS...
AAHHHH!

THEN I WAS POUNDED AND BEATEN AND DRAWN OUT OF SHAPE...
QUITE A CHANGE, MAKING A REAL OLD-FASHIONED OAK COFFIN AGAIN! HARDLY EVER SEE THEM THESE DAYS! AND THIS IS FINE WOOD, TOO! TAKE A SWELL FINISH!

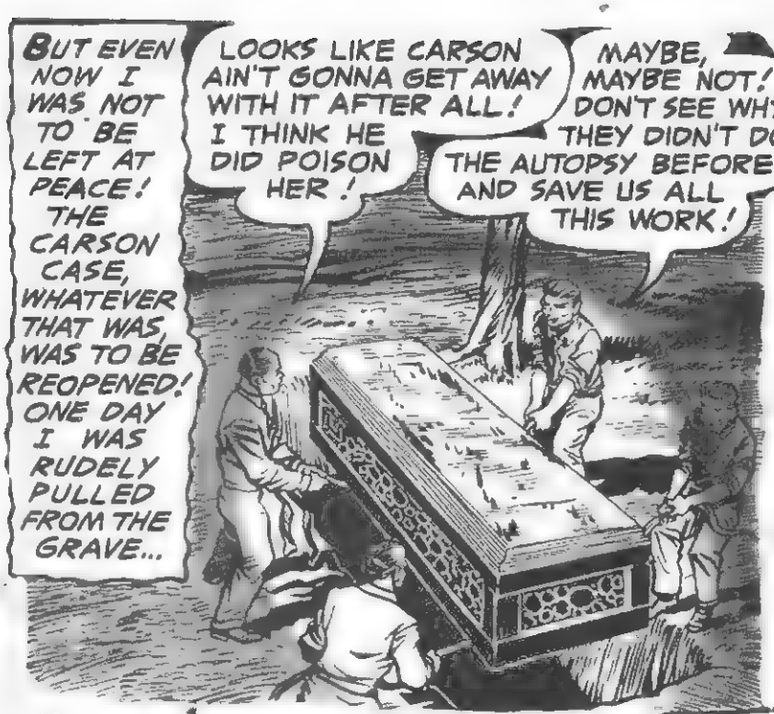
AND I DID TAKE A GOOD FINISH! I WAS POLISHED UNTIL I GLEAMED! THEN I WENT TO A MORTUARY, A DANK AND GLOOMY PLACE...
HOW ABOUT THIS ONE, SIR? MADE OF THE FINEST OAK! I KNOW YOU WANT YOUR DEAR DEPARTED WIFE TO HAVE THE BEST!
YES, OF COURSE! THAT ONE WILL DO VERY WELL! I'LL BUY IT!

AND THEN, AT LAST, I KNEW MY DESTINY! I TREMBLED WITH ANTICIPATION AS I SAW THEM BRINGING--IT...
MIGHT AS WELL GET STARTED, MIKE! WE GOT TO HAVE THE CARSON DAME READY BY MORNING!

I WAS DIZZY, REELING WITH ANTICIPATION! SLOWLY THEY LOWERED IT INTO MY WAITING ARMS...
WHAT YOU THINK ABOUT THIS CARSON THING, MIKE? YOU FIGURE HE REALLY KNOCKED HER OFF?
WHO KNOWS! LEAVE THAT TO THE COPS! OUR JOB IS JUST TO BURY 'EM! GO GET ME SOME POWDER AND LIPSTICK, HUH?

LATER I WENT FOR A SHORT RIDE TO THE CEMETERY! WE WERE HAPPY TOGETHER--JUST ME AND IT...
...AND SO WE RETURN THESE MORTAL REMAINS TO THE EARTH FROM WHICH THEY CAME! ASHES TO ASHES, DUST TO DUST!

THE LITTLE CLODS OF DIRT, LIKE GENTLE RAIN, CAME PATTERING DOWN ON ME AND I KNEW THAT SOON WE WOULD BE ALONE...
WELL, THAT'S THAT! THE END OF THE CARSON CASE!


BUT EVEN NOW I WAS NOT TO BE LEFT AT PEACE! THE CARSON CASE, WHATEVER THAT WAS, WAS TO BE REOPENED! ONE DAY I WAS RUDELY PULLED FROM THE GRAVE...
LOOKS LIKE CARSON AIN'T GONNA GET AWAY WITH IT AFTER ALL! I THINK HE DID POISON HER!
MAYBE, MAYBE NOT! DON'T SEE WHY THEY DIDN'T DO THE AUTOPSY BEFORE AND SAVE US ALL THIS WORK!

THEY TOOK ME AND IT DOWN TO A POLICE LABORATORY! BY NOW I WAS FURIOUS! THEY THOUGHT THEY HAD BEEN INCONVENIENCED! HOW ABOUT ME?
OKAY, FELLAS, PUT IT OVER THERE ON THE TABLE! UGH--HOW I HATE THESE JOBS!
ME TOO! OUGHT TO BE AN EASIER WAY TO MAKE A LIVING!
QUIT COMPLAINING! THIS CORPSE AIN'T VERY HEAVY!

I HAD TO WATCH AS THEY SLASHED MY DEAR DEAD PARTNER WITH THEIR LONG CRUEL KNIVES...
HMM--WE'LL HAVE THE STOMACH OUT IN A MINUTE! WON'T TAKE LONG TO FIND OUT IF SHE WAS POISONED OR NOT!
I'LL GIVE FIVE TO THREE SHE WAS! THAT CARSON EVEN LOOKS LIKE A RAT!

YOU WIN! ARSENIC, SURE AS YOU'RE BORN! THIS WILL REALLY COOK CARSON'S GOOSE!

THEY IGNORED ME! A SUDDEN FEAR BEGAN TO GROW IN MY MIND--I WASN'T GOING TO GET MY BODY BACK...
WE BETTER MAKE OUR REPORT! AND KEEP THE BODY IN STORAGE UNTIL AFTER THIS IS ALL OVER!
YEAH! I'LL HAVE THE MEN TAKE THE COFFIN AWAY LATER!

I WAS TO BE TAKEN AWAY--EMPTY! BUT WHERE? THE NEXT DAY I FOUND OUT...
NICE BOX THAT CARSON DAME HAD! WONDER WHAT THEY'LL DO WITH IT?
LEAVE IT TO GATHER DUST, I GUESS. I HEAR SHE'S GETTING A NEW ONE!

I DID GATHER DUST! DAYS PASSED, WEEKS, MONTHS! THEN ONE DAY...

I TOLD YA THEY'D USE THIS COFFIN! HAH-HAH! THOSE GUYS AT THE STATE PRISON DON'T MISS A TRICK!

YEAH! PRETTY CUTE-- SAVES THE STATE SOME DOUGH, TOO! EVEN A PINE BOX COSTS MONEY!

I WAS ALIVE AGAIN, DOING SOMETHING! A DELICIOUS SHIVER OF ANTICIPATION RAN OVER ME AS WE STOPPED AT A HUGE IRON GATE...

HERE YOU ARE, LARRY! WE IN TIME?

WHO CARES! THE CUSTOMER-- CHUCKLE-- AIN'T GOING ANYWHERE!

HURRY! THEY'RE GIVING IT TO HIM ANY MINUTE NOW!

SUDDENLY THE MEN STOPPED! I COULD FEEL THEM GROW TENSE! THEIR HANDS, ON ME, WERE SLIPPERY WITH SWEAT! BUT WHAT WAS HAPPENING?

THERE! SEE THOSE LIGHTS DIM! THAT'S IT!

G-GOSH, THAT POOR DEVIL! RIDING THE THUNDERBOLT!

GIVES ME A C-- CREEPY FEELING!

THEN I FORGOT THEM! I WAS HAPPY AGAIN! THEY WERE GIVING ME ANOTHER BODY!

SOME TWIST, HUH? THE GUY MURDERS HIS WIFE, BUYS HER A SWELL COFFIN, AND IN THE END...

HE USES IT! WELL, THERE WASN'T ANY SENSE IN THROWING IT AWAY, AND HER BROTHER WOULDN'T LET THEM BURY HER IN IT AGAIN. JUST BECAUSE CARSON BOUGHT IT!

AS WE DROVE TO ANOTHER GRAVEYARD, WITH MY NEW BODY NESTLED CLOSE TO MY SATIN LINING, I UNDERSTOOD AT LAST! MY NEW BODY WAS THAT OF CARSON HIMSELF...

YA KNOW, JAKE, I JUST THOUGHT OF SOMETHING FUNNY!

THEN TELL ME! I NEED CHEERING UP AFTER WHAT I SEEN TODAY!

ONCE AGAIN I FELT EARTH FALLING ON ME! NOW, AT LAST, I WAS TO BE LEFT IN PEACE, FOR ALL ETERNITY, WITH IT...

AH, I DON'T MEAN FUNNY LIKE THAT! BUT DID YA EVER THINK ABOUT A COFFIN---

NOT ANYMORE THAN I CAN HELP! COFFINS IS FOR DEAD PEOPLE! AND I AIN'T READY FOR MINE YET! IF THAT'S YOUR IDEA OF FUNNY-- SHUT UP!

BUT SUPPOSE A COFFIN WAS ALIVE, AND COULD TALK! BROTHER--SOME OF THE THINGS IT COULD TELL YA!

A COFFIN ALIVE--TALKING! YOU SNAPPED YOUR CUE, PAL! BETTER CUT OUT READING SO MANY OF THEM HORROR-STORIES!

The End

the bloody bookworm

HIS PASSION, I have reason distinctly to remember, was old books, first editions which he had bound in a manner indicative of their contents. But how long he had been a victim of this lust I have never found out. This much is certain: he made the bulk of his wealth during our war for democracy, so much money that he must have found it puzzling to devise ways of spending his income.

He was not what you would call a cultured man, for he had absurdly ungrammatical lapses. Then there was the manner in which he furnished his apartment on Fifth Avenue, not far from the Public Library with its two supercilious looking lions out in front. But the fact that he was a very powerful person gave currency to his speech. His power was not physical (for he was shrunken, stoop-shouldered, and nearly bald); it lay in the hard, brilliant light which shot from his old green eyes.

It is very likely that he took to old books, not from a love of literature, but from an avaricious desire to have a corner on something that was exceedingly scarce; and that this urge came to him after his reaches had reached the peak of their pyramid. Not content with rarity, he made his precious objects still more rare.

As you entered his apartment (he had several rooms with a fine view, from the top floor, of an expensive office building), the pall of nothing but wine-colored plush came over you. The thick hangings before the windows were of that shade and material; likewise the portieres, the huge cushions, the heavy rug, and the

fat chairs. Never rising to greet you when you came in, he sat in the most obese of the chairs, his skinny figure arrayed in a wine-colored dressing gown with cord and tassels. It was open across the chest, showing the immaculate bosom of a stiff shirt, the glossy lapels of a dinner coat, and a reddish, scrawny neck.

He had a button near his chair which he used to summon his Negro valet. And he could push this button without your noticing that he had moved. "Evenin'," he would greet you in his rasping, unsteady voice; and before you had got seated the valet would appear with a tray on which stood a decanter and two glasses. It was good liquor and worth going after. Tawny liquor, a proof of what the mystery of nature and the genius of man can do. And as you drank, you felt the butler-valet hovering near, but not too near. He was a huge, sleek-headed man with a blobby nose and massive shoulders. His black eyes were always swimming around in their pools of white as if they would tell of things which his lips were afraid to speak.

Between drinks, the tenacious old devil would show you his books. "See this 'un? . . . Forgot," he would mumble. "Reckon I showed you that," he would end as he removed a first edition of *Elsie Venner* out of the revolving bookcase which stood at his right hand.

Yes, you had seen that one. The binding was rough to the touch and there were two rows of irregular diamonds running along the cover. Very appropriately, it was bound in the skin of rattlesnakes. You also had seen the veritable whaleskin binding of the first edition of *Moby Dick*. And the exotic feathers, artfully placed, which made the cover for *Green Mansions*. You had already mused over the flaming "A" which had been worked into the heavy brocade with which *The Scarlet Letter* was bound. You had also seen the tigerskin binding of an early copy of Balzac's *Passion in the Desert*.

But now and again this ardent old bibliophile had something strikingly new to show you. As when he added *Les Fleurs du Mal* in the silky hide of a coal black cat to his library. Or when he brought out a copy of *The Idiot* encased in Russian banknotes of several generations ago. Those sights (and the liquor) recompensed you for being shown such obvious acquisitions as *Beautiful Joe* in dogskin, *Black Beauty* in horsehide, *The Origin of the Species* in the covering of an ape . . .

What trouble and pains he went to in order that his passion might be satisfied! One evening, after the customary greeting from his armchair and the customary drink from the glistening decanter, he reached toward his revolving case and his skinny fingers closed over a new volume.

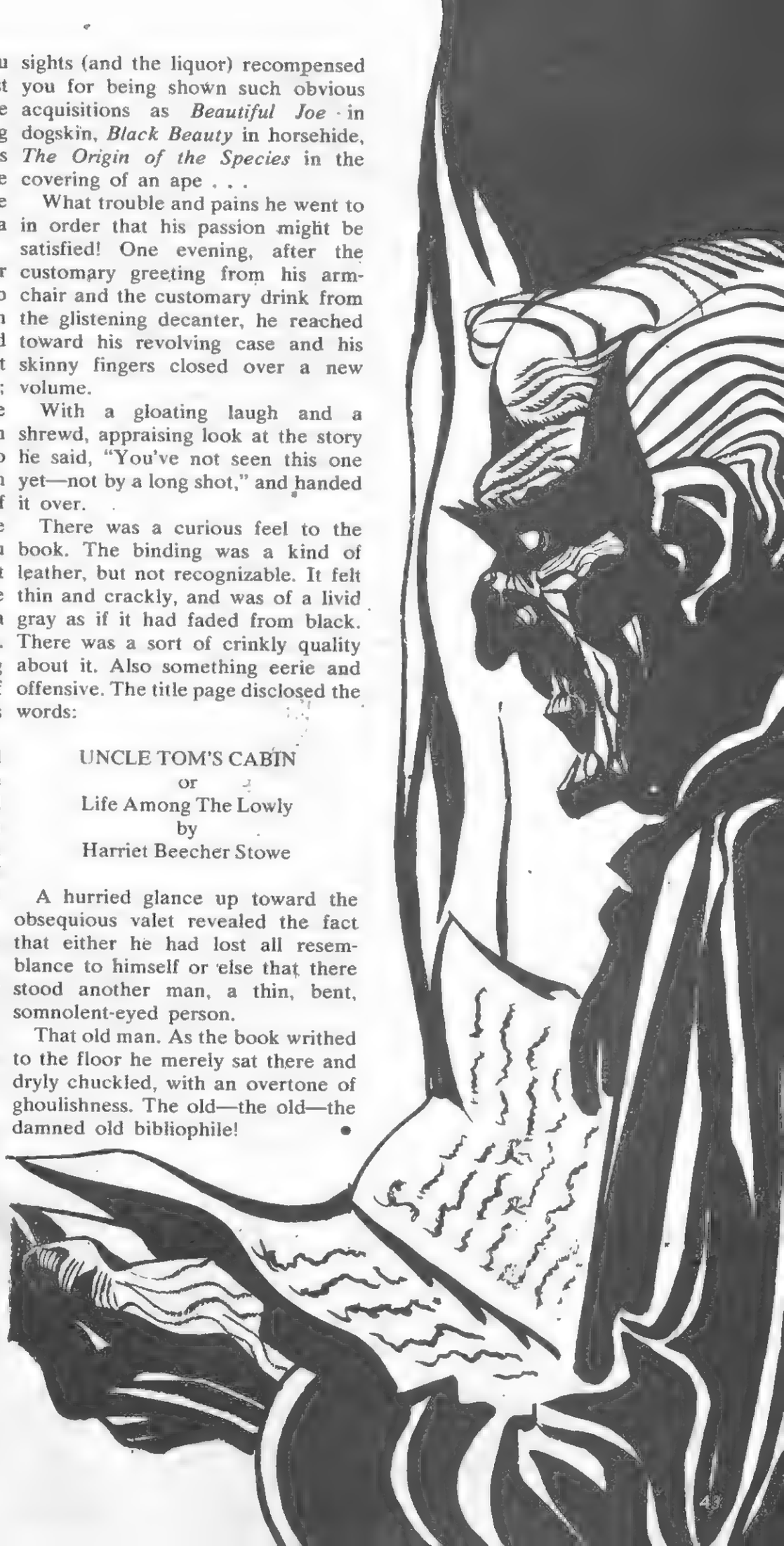
With a gloating laugh and a shrewd, appraising look at the story he said, "You've not seen this one yet—not by a long shot," and handed it over.

There was a curious feel to the book. The binding was a kind of leather, but not recognizable. It felt thin and crackly, and was of a livid gray as if it had faded from black. There was a sort of crinkly quality about it. Also something eerie and offensive. The title page disclosed the words:

UNCLE TOM'S CABIN
or
Life Among The Lowly
by
Harriet Beecher Stowe

A hurried glance up toward the obsequious valet revealed the fact that either he had lost all resemblance to himself or else that there stood another man, a thin, bent, somnolent-eyed person.

That old man. As the book writhed to the floor he merely sat there and dryly chuckled, with an overtone of ghoulishness. The old—the old—the damned old bibliophile! •

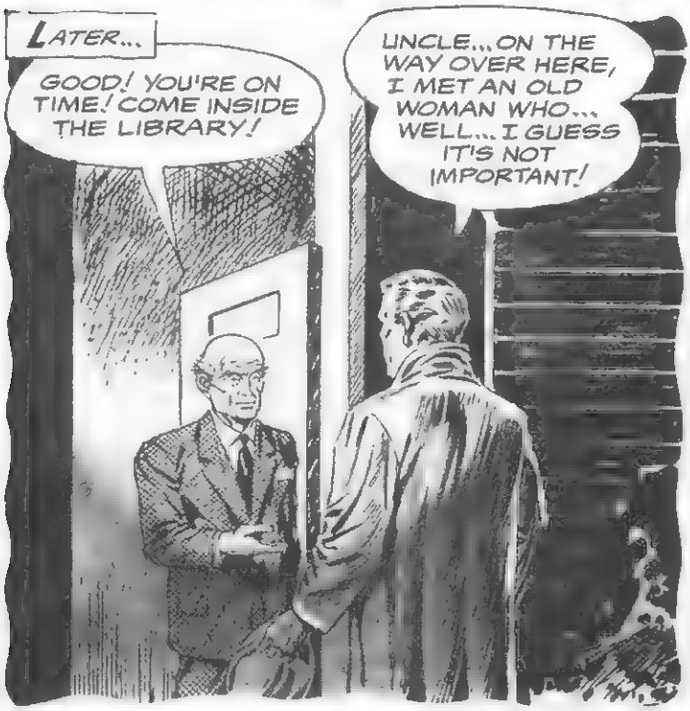


BLACK MAGIC

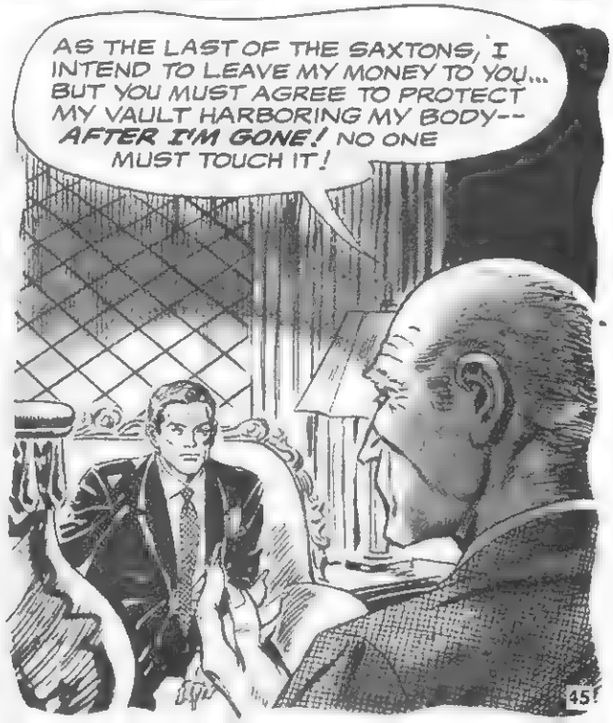
WHEN THE MYSTERIOUS VINCENT ZOLTAN WAS BURIED, THE ENTIRE TOWN OF GHATTAM, MAINE TURNED OUT FOR HIS FUNERAL! AMONG THEM WAS ALAN SAXTON, THE WRITER!
HM... THAT WAS A STRANGE SERMON...
ALAN--!

UNCLE MAT! WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE? I HAVEN'T SEEN YOU FOR ALMOST A YEAR!
THERE IS SOMETHING I MUST TELL YOU... BE AT MY HOUSE TONIGHT WITHOUT FAIL! OUR FUTURES ARE AT STAKE!

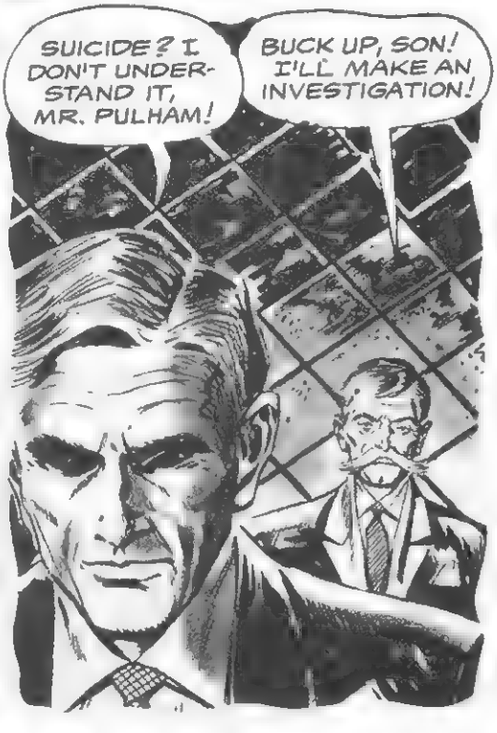
...AND LATER THAT NIGHT, AS ALAN SAXTON WAS WALKING TO HIS UNCLE'S HOUSE...



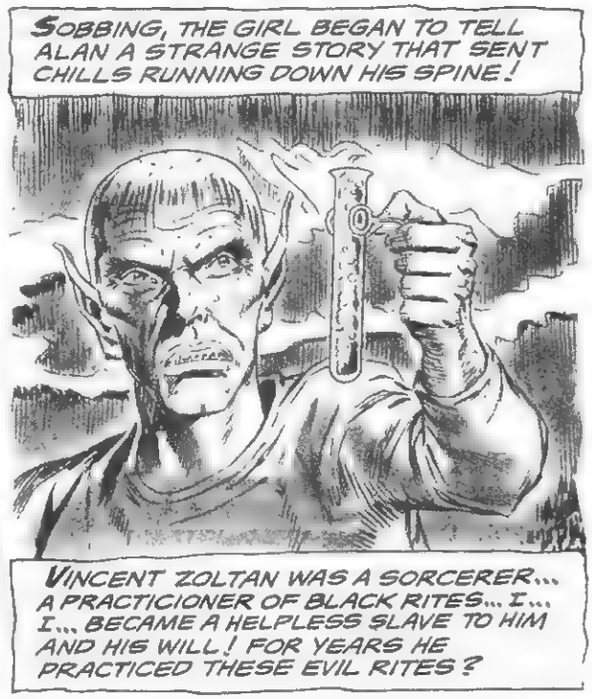
ALAN WISELY KEPT QUIET ABOUT THE INCIDENT, AND MAT SAXTON CAME IMMEDIATELY TO THE POINT!



MUTTERING THUS TO HIMSELF, THE OLD MAN CALLED FOR HIS CARETAKER WHO TURNED OUT TO BE A BEAUTIFUL YOUNG GIRL!



BUT NOTHING CAME OUT OF THE INVESTIGATION... ALAN SETTLED IN HIS UNCLE'S HOUSE... IN THE MONTHS THAT FOLLOWED, IT WAS INEVITABLE THAT HE WOULD BE ATTRACTED TO THE BEAUTIFUL CARETAKER...
NO... NO! YOU MUSTN'T BE IN LOVE WITH ME! YOU WILL ONLY BRING DESTRUCTION ON YOURSELF... JUST LIKE YOUR UNCLE!
MY UNCLE! JOAN ...DO YOU KNOW SOMETHING YOU HAVEN'T TOLD THE POLICE?
NO! IT'S NOTHING, REALLY! I...I WAS STARTLED...OH, ALAN... I'M FRIGHTENED!
OF WHAT, DEAR? IT WILL BE DIFFERENT NOW... YOU'LL SEE! HERE... TAKE THIS LOCKET AS A TOKEN OF OUR LOVE...
INDEED, THE ONLY TASK THAT MARRED ALAN'S CONTENTMENT, WAS A MIGHTY INSPECTION OF THE BURIAL VAULT'S SEALS- ACCORDING TO HIS UNCLE'S WISHES THOUGH TRIVIAL, IT HAD BECOME INCREASINGLY IRRITATING...
HM... I THOUGHT THIS LOCK WAS TURNED THE OTHER WAY LAST TIME... JUST MY IMAGINATION, I GUESS...
THE NEXT NIGHT...
ALAN SEES THE FIGURE MAKE ITS WAY STEALTHILY TO THE VAULT!
A TRESPASSER! I'LL FOLLOW HIM... AND SEE WHAT HE'S UP TO!
AS THE MUFFLED STRANGER FUMBLED WITH THE SEALS OF THE VAULT, ALAN SPRANG UPON HIM ANGRILY...
SO THE LOCK WAS TAMPERED WITH AFTER ALL!
BUT THE INTRUDER WHRILED AROUND, AND...
GOOD LORD! THAT FACE!

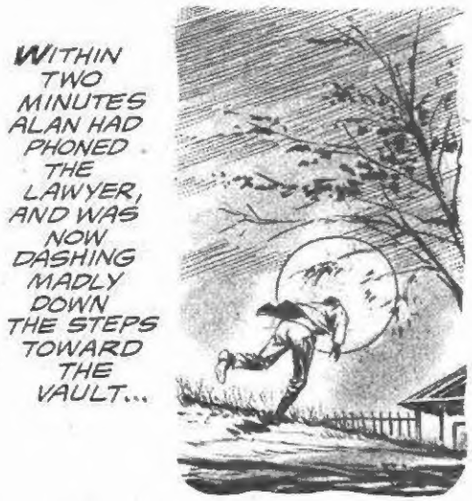


THEN, FINDING OUT ZOLTAN FOR THE EVIL MONSTER THAT HE WAS, YOUR UNCLE TRIED TO BREAK AWAY FROM HIM, BUT COULD NOT! SO HE KILLED HIM THROUGH SORCERY, THUS FREEING ME... I BECAME HIS CARETAKER...

YOUR UNCLE DUG HIM OUT AND BURIED HIM IN THE BACKYARD WITH THE PROPER SPELLS? BUT HE FORGOT THAT ZOLTAN COULD RETURN TO LIFE, FOR THOSE KILLED BY SORCERY ROAM BETWEEN THE WORLDS IN SEARCH OF THEIR MURDERERS!

YES, THOSE KILLED BY SORCERY CANNOT REST, BUT SEEK THEIR KILLER'S BODY AND SOUL!

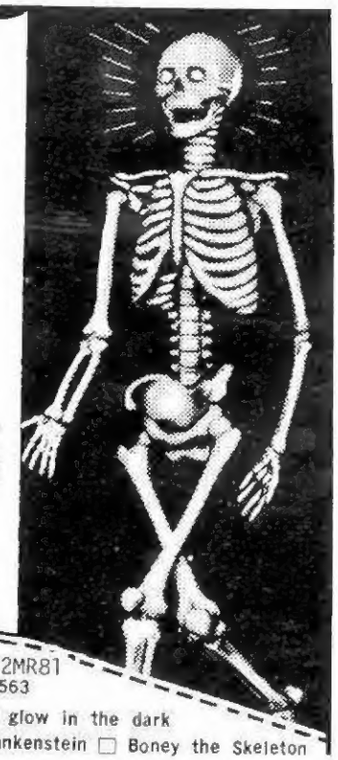
BUT A THIRD PRESENCE WAS IN THE ROOM, AND WHEN ALAN HAD RUSHED DOWN-STAIRS...



MINUTES LATER, HE WAS RUNNING DOWN THE ROAD ALONG WHICH THE LAWYER MUST COME!

CONTINUED ON BACK COVER

MONSTER S-I-Z-E MONSTERS



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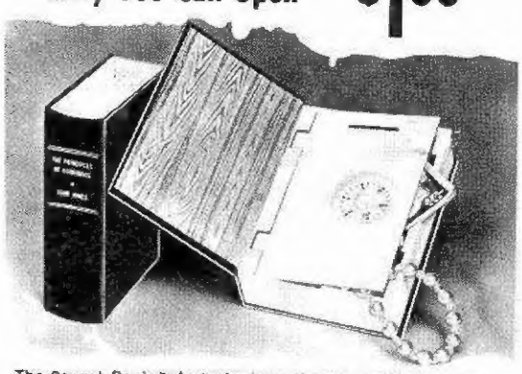

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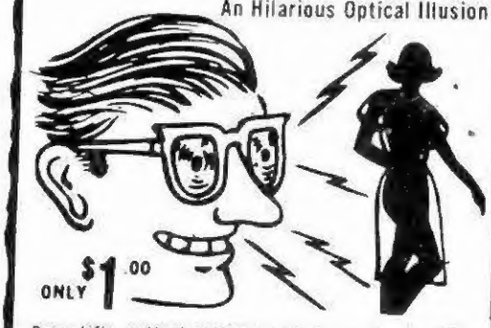

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WHILE PULHAM DROVE FRANTICALLY TOWARD THE HOUSE, ALAN EXPLAINED AS MUCH AS HE COULD TO HIS FRIEND! SECONDS LATER...

GOOD LORD, THE MONSTER! AND I... I DIDN'T QUITE BELIEVE YOU!

HURRY! WE MUST REACH ZOLTAN'S BODY AND BURN IT BEFORE THE "THING" GETS THERE! THEN, IT WILL HAVE NOTHING TO GO BACK TO...

STOP HERE! THIS IS WHERE ZOLTAN'S BODY IS BURIED! WE'VE GOT TO DIG IT OUT AND BURN IT OURSELVES BEFORE THAT THING GETS THERE! THEN JOAN MAY COME BACK TO ME! UNCLE MAT COULDN'T DO IT BECAUSE THE GHOST WOULD STILL HAVE REMAINED ALIVE!

MINUTES PASSED AS PULHAM AND ALAN WORKED FEVERISHLY TO UNCOVER THE REMAINS!

HURRY, CAN'T YOU? THE CREATURE IS COMING! IT KNOWS WHAT WE'RE GOING TO DO!

OKAY-- BUILD THAT FIRE! I'VE... UGH... REACHED THE COFFIN!

LOOK! THERE'S A SECOND COMPARTMENT IN THIS COFFIN! --THE BODY OF A WOMAN DEAD FOR MANY YEARS... AND THERE'S A LOCKET AROUND HER NECK! **GOOD LORD--** IT'S...IT'S...

JOAN!

ARE YOU SURE THERE EVER WAS A JOAN!

AS THE TWO MEN STARED WITH HORROR AT THE MUMMIFIED FIGURE OF THE THING THAT HAD CALLED ITSELF "JOAN", THE TERRIBLE MEANING BECAME VERY CLEAR: A GREATER AND LONGER TORTURE HAD BEGUN FOR BOTH VINCENT ZOLTAN AND HIS COMPANION WHO HAD DABBLED IN BLACK MAGIC AND LOST! WHAT HAPPENED TO JOAN, WAS THERE REALLY A JOAN?

THE END